# HUMAN JUSTICE FOR THOSE AT THE BOTTOM AN APPEAL TO THOSE AT THE TOP

C. C. COTTERILL

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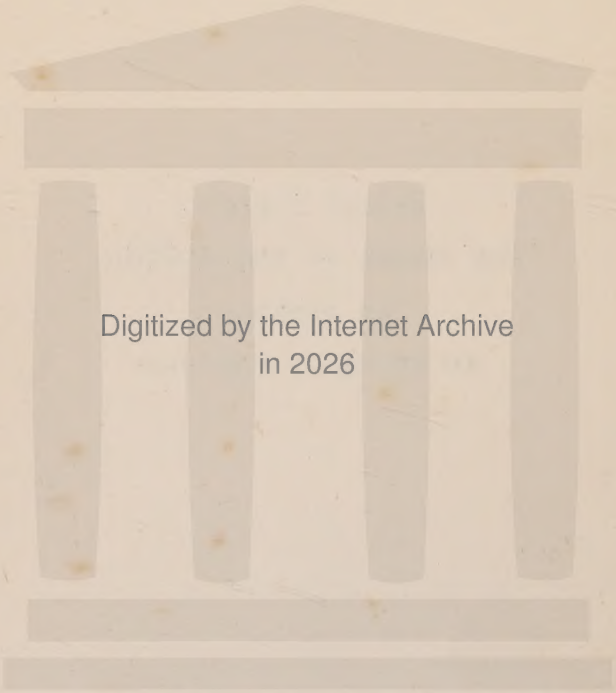

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# HUMAN JUSTICE

# FOR THOSE AT THE BOTTOM

# AN APPEAL TO THOSE AT THE TOP

*A FRAGMENT*

BY

C. C. COTTERILL

οὐκ ὄναρ, ἀλλ' ὕπαρ ἐσθλόν, ὅ τοι τετελεσμένον ἔσται

No dream, but waking vision sound and true,
Which one day verily shall be fulfilled.

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1908

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TO THE YOUNG, OF ALL AGES

# PREFACE

TO

# SECOND EDITION

I AM glad to take this opportunity of correcting certain misapprehensions on the part of some of the journals that have reviewed the book, and some of my many correspondents. In every case the misapprehension touches important points, and in some cases vitiates the whole argument, and in every case the correction will be found in the book itself.

1. The appeal to 'those at the top' is not made to the 'very rich' only. The following passage shows this: 'Among those at the top there would be included a certain proportion who have little, and in some cases nothing, to spare after they have satisfied the requirements

of a human existence.' (P. 10.) In the 'upper classes' I include the upper middle classes, and of course the professional classes. As I had in the book included myself as a member of the class to which I appeal, it might perhaps seem unnecessary to add this, but I want to make any further misapprehension on the point impossible. Roughly speaking, I would estimate those at the top numerically as I have done those at the bottom—as about a million.

2. It has been assumed that when, in the chapter entitled 'The Children,' I have urged the women to come to the aid of the children and do their utmost to remedy their pitiable condition, I have at the same time urged them to desist from demanding the vote. The following words will be found on p. 50: 'I am not, of course, for a moment suggesting that women should cease to fight for the vote, or to stop fighting till they get it.'

3. I have been taken as condemning the present condition of those at the bottom, on the ground of its being an infringement of abstract, ideal justice. On p. 34 I write: 'It is with *human* justice alone that we are throughout concerned.' And to make my meaning

quite clear, I have on the next page given my definition of human justice.

4. I have been assured that, even if those at the top were to do as I urge them—come to the aid of those at the bottom and remedy their condition—the remedy would be temporary, and the return to the old condition of things, or a still worse condition, would be swift and inevitable. The following quotations will show that, in the plan I have proposed, I have had specially in my mind the permanence of the work done; and I believe that a careful reading of what I have written on the subject will also prove that, on the supposition that the upper classes take up the business in the way I have suggested, this permanence will be insured: 'The object of this particular appeal is . . . to lay the foundations of a complete and final remedy for the terrible condition of a certain very limited section of society—the million or so at the bottom. The intention is to give an object lesson which may be followed up through the whole of the twelve million or more that are on "the verge of hunger."' (Pp. 195–6.) 'Such is the condition of things brought about among these people by the united co-operation of all

the members of the upper classes. It is, by our hypothesis, sound as far as it goes; for it has been set on foot by men and women possessed of an almost infinite variety of capacities, sympathies, and experience. And the organisation has been provided by the brains of the best organisers that the country possesses, the best experts in scientific organisation.' (P. 197.)

5. It has been assumed that I regard the remedy almost entirely as a matter of transference of money from those who have it to those who have it not. I quote the following passages without comment: 'The part that money plays is so subordinate. . . . With personal service it is very different. Upon the quantity and the quality of this hangs everything.' (P. 185.) 'Money is necessary. But money alone, however lavishly it might be bestowed, is perfectly useless for the accomplishment of the purpose. It has been by inhumanity that these people have reached their present condition; it is only by humanity that that condition can be remedied. Without the full recognition of this, the best plan of action would be doomed to failure. With it, whatever be the plan of action, there can only be predestined success.' (P. 194.)

When all is said and done, we come at last always to this. It is only by human sympathy that a human wrong can be righted, and when the sense of the injustice rises to a certain point of fervour, when the sympathy, the fellow-feeling with the suffering, is deep enough and wide enough, the story of humanity invariably tells us that the time for parleying with difficulties is over, and the injustice is swept away. Despite the raising of doubts and difficulties, are there perhaps signs that those to whom I have appealed are coming to that point of sensitiveness to this particular injustice, at which swift and effectual action becomes a necessary and irresistible command of conscience? I sometimes think—I always hope—that this is so.

The solution of all such problems as this can be final and complete only in proportion to the sense of brotherhood and love that is among us—in proportion to the quantity and quality of this. And I firmly believe that this is increasing in every section of the community. Is this sense wide enough and deep enough, does it exist among a sufficient number of the members of the upper classes, and with sufficient warmth, to overcome, first, their own

doubts and hesitations, and next, the inertia of those who are as yet less warm than they? If so, we shall have but little time to wait before this particular example of injustice is swept away by those specially called upon to sweep it away. If not—well, it will be swept away, sooner or later, by other means and other methods. And one of these methods will be the method of compulsion. Those who have so much will be compelled to give to those who have so little. The compulsory method has, we know, already begun. Yes, but this spoils it all. They will give what they have to give because they are compelled to give it. But there is one thing you cannot compel them to give—you cannot compel them to give their love. And if you leave this out, you leave out everything that is really worth giving or worth possessing. This is the simple truth, and if we do not see it to-day we shall see it to-morrow.

The solution of even this narrowly limited problem that I have proposed for solution is, I well know, a very difficult and complicated matter, and will involve much thought and much labour on the part of those who set out to solve it. But I continue to believe that by the

means and by the persons I have suggested it can be solved, and, I will add, solved within no very long period of time. Much thought, much labour. Yes, but the motive power, if there is to be real success, can only come from the exercise and collaboration of the great human qualities of brotherhood and love. Without this impulse from within all the labour will be nothing, with this it will be everything.

From the first page to the last, this little book is on one condition wholly unpractical, and wholly practical on another. It is wholly unpractical, if, in order to bring about material, or economic, or social changes in the condition of the very poor, it is useless to appeal to a sense of justice, to brotherliness and love, in the natures of those members of the community who have so much superfluity of those things—not money only—of which the very poor have such a cruel deficiency. It is wholly practical, if the appeal to justice, brotherliness, kindness, and love is the only way to stir those members of the community to whom the appeal is made to such action as shall be entirely blessed in its results, human, permanent, final; to such action as shall bring with it not merely temporary

alleviation of the evil, but the final cure of it; not division, bitterness, class war, and all such things, but peace, sweetness, unity, and the joyous sweeping away of the very existence of separate classes at all.

It is because my confidence in this way is complete, that I pursue it. The fact that I believe in appealing to what is greatest and noblest in human beings does not prevent me from denouncing what is worst and meanest in us. But denunciation and all such methods are of themselves, and of their very nature, powerless to produce a great human revolution which is to heal humanity.

If the upper classes to whom I appeal as I have appealed shew themselves unmoved by this method of appeal, whether made by me or by others—well, there it is, and there, so long as they remain thus unmoved, it will be.

But there is something to add to this. We almost all agree that the present social conditions are hopelessly, absurdly out of date, and must be remedied. If there are any of us who do not agree about this, I must leave them out. Let me, then, put this question. How do we propose to change these conditions—by what

methods, by what kinds of appeal, not only as made to this class or to that, but to the whole community? In this little book I am directly concerned with the appeal to one class only, but this is merely accidental. The methods must be the same—for the appeal is to human beings—whether the appeal be made to one individual or to the whole community. What is to be the nature of the general appeal to all the members of this community of nearly fifty million people? That is the question. Is the appeal to be mainly to their fears or their cupidities or to anything of the kind—that is, to the poor and paltry stuff in them, to what is temporary, foreign, mean, and opposed to all that is most real and human in them? Or, to their sense of justice, their brotherliness and love—that is, to what is permanent, elementary, noble, and of the very essence of what is true and real in their human natures? For me at least, as there is no doubt as to the method of appeal, so there can of course be no doubt also as to the method of action.

The only way by which not only this particular wrong, but all great human wrongs can permanently and finally be righted—that is, the

only 'practical' way—is the way of brotherliness and neighbourliness, the way of kindness and love. This particular wrong can, I am well aware, only be righted as the result of much effort, much labour; but if it is to be effectual, permanent, final, that which must be behind it, its motive power, its push, must always be the push of brotherliness and love. Nil sine labore. Yes, but also, Nil sine amore. All other labour for humanity, for the righting of any human wrong, that has not this behind it is transitory, insecure, in the air, dreamy, fantastical, and hopelessly, absurdly unpractical. There is only one effort, one labour for the righting of human wrongs that is unwasteful, sure, and practical—and that is the labour of love. Love's labour alone is never lost. To this conclusion we shall all come sooner or later. No one who ponders over it, no one who sees things as they really are, can or will come finally to any other conclusion but this.

The ultimate, as distinct from the immediate, aim of this little book is to hasten the coming of that inevitable day. Everything that tends to retard this is only waste and worse than waste. That which tends to accelerate it is

alone worth attempting. The apprehension of this truth is the only thing that matters to humanity. It is the only vision, the only ideal, that is true. And its realisation is the one great, final, consummate heritage of humanity. When this ideal is realised, then, and only then, will humanity come to its own. But then it will.

C. C. C.

Coombe Field, Godalming.
*February* 1908.

# NOTE

It is due to the criticisms and suggestions of friends that this small fragment is not more imperfect than it is, and I am very grateful to them.

I have had lately to dictate mainly instead of writing, with the result of many defects which, though patent enough, I have not always been able to correct.

There might, no doubt, have been further improvement in what is now published, but this would have taken time, and I felt that this appeal had already been too long deferred.

C. C. C.

Coombe Field, Godalming.
*October* 1907.

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# HUMAN JUSTICE
# FOR THOSE AT THE BOTTOM

## CHAPTER I

### PRELIMINARY

The subject matter of what follows is strictly limited. It is directly concerned only with those who represent the two extremes of society in England to-day—the extreme at the bottom and the extreme at the top. With the rest it is not directly concerned at all. My reasons for introducing this limitation will be made plain subsequently. It is sufficient here to call attention to the fact.

My purpose in writing is to induce those who are at the top to come to the aid of those who are at the bottom, and to provide, not a temporary alleviation, but a permanent cure for their pitiful and shameful lot.

The situation is this. There is a small section of the community at the top which, as a body, has a harmful excess of the means of supplying all the necessaries, and many of the comforts and luxuries, of life. A certain portion of this section possesses an immense and, in some cases, a quite shocking superfluity of these. At the other end there is a section which has, with absolutely no exception of any kind, a most shameful and pitiful deficiency of them. My aim now is to induce those who have the excess to minister out of this excess to those who have the deficiency.

It is, I believe, never questioned that this situation is deplorable, and it is rarely questioned that it is unjust. But that it is capable of being put an end to is often questioned. The doubt is expressed by all sorts of people, from those who know nothing of the subject to those who know and care a great deal about it. The conclusion is the same, but the reasons given for arriving at it are various.

'There must always be dregs.' 'If those at the top, out of their superfluity, ministered to the deficiency of those at the bottom, they would pauperise and enervate them, and so only magnify the seriousness of the situation.' 'We hold our own to-day with difficulty in the face of the

world's competition, and any step such as this might turn the scale and land the nation in commercial disaster.' 'However pitiful and unjust the thing may be, the remedy must, of necessity, be a slow process extending over a long period.' 'Human nature being what it is, it is unreasonable to expect those at the top to do what you ask them to do.'

Such are but samples of the objections, and to all such the reply is simple and final. To acknowledge in any community the existence of a condition of things, where in one section of society there is a great deficiency and in another section a great superfluity, and at the same time to state the impossibility of remedying the deficiency, is to proclaim the bankruptcy of the human mind. The phrase was applied to a similar situation in another country, but it is applicable to all such situations everywhere. Nor have I found that, after due reflection, its truth and finality have ever been questioned. Its truth and finality may for some be more readily and completely realised by the consideration of another truth: 'It is unjust, it cannot last.'[1] The words were applied by the Duke of Weimar to

[1] The words are quoted in a remarkable article by Mr. W. S. Lilly, on 'The Cost of Cheapness,' in the *Fortnightly Review* for April, 1905.

the situation created by Napoleon when he was at the height of his power, with apparently nothing to prevent the permanency of the situation which he had created. But in reality its doom was declared by the very fact that it was unjust. For the story of mankind declares the inevitably predestined dissolution, sooner or later, of any situation, however apparently secure, which is based upon injustice.

To all objections, then, to the possibility of remedying this particular condition of extreme superfluity at one end and extreme deficiency at the other, however apparently unanswerable they may be by logic or expediency or anything of the kind, there is the final reply that the thing is unjust and cannot therefore last, and that to assert the impossibility of remedying such an evil is to proclaim the bankruptcy of the human mind.

I never have the shadow of a doubt that some day, and by some agency or agencies, this particular blot will be wiped out, this particular injustice remedied. But I cannot hide from myself, and I do not wish to hide from others, that, under certain unfavourable conditions, the day for this may be indefinitely and cruelly postponed, with disastrous consequences to all concerned. And my reason for writing

now is to hasten the day, with the accompanying blessed consequences of such expedition to all concerned.

The question, then, is not whether this particular blot shall be removed and this particular injustice remedied, for to that question the inflexibility of justice and the soundness of the human mind give but one reply. But the question is: When and by whom shall the work be done? The direct aim of all that follows is to induce that small section of society which is at the top to undertake the work, and to carry it out swiftly. And this is the answer to the question: When and by whom?

There is another point to notice. The community which consciously permits the indefinitely prolonged existence within it of a situation of the pitifulness of which it is quite conscious, and of the injustice of which it is also, though not so completely, conscious, is in an evil and a critical condition. And the evilness and the criticalness of its condition bear an exact proportion to the completeness with which such pitifulness and such injustice are realised by the community. Little real good can come to any community that realises, even if it be but dimly, the existence of such a situation, and leaves it unremedied. No real good can come to any community that

realises it fully, and does not remedy it. I believe that England's realisation of all this is sufficiently clear and certain to make the present condition of England critical. That is, I believe that no real good of any kind could come to England if the remedying of this unjust and pitiful condition of those at the bottom was to be indefinitely postponed. Were this to happen, the whole community would, in one way or another, suffer for it. This being my belief, it will be understood that a special incentive is given to my desire to induce those at the top to remedy the evil, and to remedy it as swiftly as possible. For I believe that the main responsibility for the remedying of it rests upon those at the top, and, next, that the remedy could be applied more quickly, and with greater accompanying blessings, by them than by any other agency known to me.

What is now published I have called a fragment, and a word of apology for its publication must be added.

I have been engaged for some years upon a subject of which the social relations of the different members of the community formed a part. I was writing about Human Progress and Human Nature, and the place in these of Love. In its proper place there would have

been included what I had to say on the subject of Socialism—which I will now define as Justice, Kindness and Love—and of the truly pitiful and shameful condition of many of the poorest members of the community in England to-day. For long I had felt strongly the shame and horror of all this, and was only too well aware that, my feelings being what they were, I ought, with as little delay as possible, to translate them into such action as was possible for me. Yet I continued to think that, taking everything into consideration, the best thing for me to do, the best method of action that I could adopt, was to go on working away at the whole subject, and to show how socialism and justice to the poor fell each into its place as a portion of it.

But circumstances were too much for me. I came to feel, with a strength of feeling which it was at last impossible to resist, that to go on calmly writing on the whole subject, with the pitiful and shameful condition of these poor people constantly before my eyes, and hardly ever absent from my thoughts, was something like a mockery of them, and therefore no longer possible. I could, therefore, do nothing but what I am now doing. I had, that is, to break off from my main subject, and to do what I could to get ready this fragment of it, with all

the limitations and drawbacks attaching to a fragment. For what is fundamental and vital is, in this fragmentary presentation of it, omitted. The beginning and the ending of the whole matter is Love. And it was in the hope that I might be able to set forth the truth of this that I have been for some years working on the subject. But it is a vast subject, and though I was beginning to have hopes that the time was not far distant when I might at least present it in outline, I could not be sure of this. But of one thing I could be sure. I was sure that these people went on suffering, and that to remedy their sufferings I was doing nothing directly, and could not honestly name to myself any definite date when I should be able to do anything.

Hence the publication of this fragment. Hence also—for I really could not have published it without this—my apology for its publication.

The reader will, I am sure, understand that there was no other alternative for me but to prepare and publish this appeal with as little delay as possible, in the hope that I may thus attain my purpose. And my purpose is the discovery and the application, not of alleviations, but of a complete and final remedy for

the pitiful and shameful condition of the very poor in England to-day.

With the view of preventing possible future misconceptions, I will at the outset explain the meaning that I attach to the expressions, 'those at the bottom' and 'those at the top,' which I have used in the title.

For my present purpose, among 'those at the bottom' I include only those who are living lives that are a shameful outrage upon human justice. That is, there are withheld from them the elementary requirements necessary for a human existence. They are not even provided with the bare necessities for such an existence, to say nothing of anything beyond this. Or, if they are provided with such bare necessities, the conditions under which they provide themselves with them are wholly and cruelly unsuited to their natural capacities for the performance of the work imposed upon them.

Some years ago the present Prime Minister brought to the knowledge of his countrymen a fact of which before they were only vaguely conscious, and emphasised it in a single phrase, when he spoke of the twelve or thirteen millions who lived always 'on the verge of hunger.' Well, it is, roughly speaking, with the bottom

million of these millions that I am now concerned. It is these that I mean by 'those at the bottom.'

By 'those at the top' I do not mean all those who are provided with the necessaries of life and something more. I mean a smaller body than this, and a different body. I mean those who are—using the word in a somewhat wider sense than is usual—members of the upper classes. I include all those who, either in their own persons or in the persons of their forbears, are, as I have elsewhere explained, mainly responsible for the condition of those at the bottom; for the condition, that is, of those whom I am now appealing to them to aid.

Among those at the top there would be included a certain proportion who have little, and in some cases nothing, to spare after they have satisfied the requirements of a human existence. That is, whilst I exclude some who, so far as their possession of money and what money can purchase goes, would be included in the well-to-do, I include also some who would not come under this category at all. That is, I appeal for my present purpose, and my present purpose only, to the members of the upper classes as a *class*. And appealing to them as

this, I appeal to their sense of justice, of honour, and of responsibility, and to their *esprit de corps*. I do not appeal to them only on the grounds that, as a body, they possess more wealth and more leisure than, numbers for numbers, are possessed by any other body in England to-day. I appeal to them also on the grounds—and what these grounds are is stated more fully in a subsequent chapter—that, being what they are, they are clearly marked out, as distinct from any other body in the community, for the performance of this special service. And I appeal thus to them also because I have good hopes that, being what they are, they will recognise the peculiar fitness of the appeal. How far it may eventually turn out that some of those who would not to-day regard themselves as members of the upper classes may claim to take a share in the performance of a great purpose demanded by justice and pity, I don't know. But my appeal does not include these, and is strictly limited as I have described. It is not, of course, possible always to draw the line of limitation with precision as to who are to be included in this particular portion of the community. But that is a matter of no importance. Roughly speaking, we know what the limits are, and that is sufficient for us now.

There may, perhaps, be some persons who will be dissatisfied with what they may consider the indefiniteness of my definition of these two sections of society—those at the bottom and those at the top. For such I can do no more than say that it is impossible to draw the line of inclusion and exclusion quite sharply, and that I have done my best to draw it as sharply as I can.

When writing of these two extreme sections of society, I use indifferently the expressions, 'those at the top,' 'the upper classes,' 'the well-to-do,' to express one extreme; and 'those at the bottom,' 'the very poor,' 'the ill-to-do,' to express the other extreme.

With the same desire of avoiding possible misconceptions, I must say something as to the meaning I attach to a word that will be frequently used in these pages.

The appeal to those at the top to come to the aid of those at the bottom is an appeal to them in furtherance of the first of the three constituents of socialism. I doubt whether there is any word which is to-day in England more loosely used and misapplied than the word 'socialism.' And I wish to do what I can to make it clear in what sense I use the word. What I have to say will be an expansion—as

brief as is possible consistently with the attainment of my object—of the definition of the word already given above. Socialism is there defined as, 'Justice, Kindness, Love.'

Socialism in its ultimate aim, that is, Ideal Socialism, is the establishment amongst the members of a community of individual and common love. The practical means by which this ideal is to be realised, this faith visualised, are justice and kindness.

The aim of socialism from its economic side is to provide all human beings with the means of satisfying the requirements of a human existence —that is, to provide them with all the necessaries of life and something more. This statement represents the elementary minimum, and the satisfying of this elementary minimum is the satisfying of the claims of human justice. I have elsewhere defined and explained in some detail what is meant by human justice, and must refer the reader to what is there stated. But it is necessary to say here that the mere use of the epithet 'human' bears along with it also the idea of kindness, or humanity. In all strictness, therefore, the use of the middle term might be dispensed with, and our trinity of justice, kindness and love be reduced to a duality. But by such a reduction much would be lost and

nothing, I think, gained. And in my use of the word socialism I shall continue to regard it in its ultimate aim as identical with love, and shall regard the steps by which that aim is to be reached, as justice and kindness. The ultimate end will be reached some day, and all that is possible for a human being, whatever that may be, in the direction of perfection will one day be realised. But the date of the coming of that consummate day no one can foretell. The prevalence of individual and common love may be deferred for ages, or it may come with a swiftness unimagined, even unimaginable by us to-day. And it is something more substantial for me than a hope that its advent may be thus unimaginably swift.

Love, it is true, is not always at our command, but kindness is. It is not indeed true that love cannot be cultivated; the experience of our lives proves that it can. But great obstacles are to-day in many cases still placed in the way of the cultivation, if not of individual love, certainly of common love. As time goes on, these obstacles will, largely owing to the changed and humanised condition of our lives, largely owing to the growth of socialism, be more and more removed. And the knowledge of this undoubted truth should surely be a great

incitement to us to do what we can to bring about socialism. The steps by which this great end may be reached are, as we have seen, justice and kindness ; and both of these can, in large measure, be attained by the conscious efforts of any individual who sets himself to attain them, though the effort may often be hard and the success partial.

Human justice is justice and kindness. Human kindness is kindness and love, or, in a single word—one of the dearest and most inward in the English language—lovingkindness. Look at these three as you will, their indissolubility is inevitable. Lovingkindness is one of the aspects of love in action, practical love. Love without kindness is—in so far as it can and does exist—inhuman, dead, buried. Kindness without love is comparatively cold ; and, in so far as the absence of love is known to the recipient of the kindness, is—just in that proportion, in proportion to its coldness—sterile and useless. Indeed, the sweetness with which the kindness abounds is, if we could but see it, in exact proportion to the *quality* of the kindness—that is, to the measure of the love that warms and vitalises the kindness.

This then, is socialism—socialism as seen and foreseen in its ideal, and as it is to be realised

and visualised by the means that can, if we will, be put into practice by us all. The ultimate ideal is Love. The practical means for its realisation are justice and kindness, both of which must, if they are to be vital, and in exact proportion to their vitality, be interfused with love.

It may be said that all this is very well in a way, but the way is fanciful and not practical. I fear that all I can reply is simply that such an objection is only due to lack of faith and lack of sight. This way is the only way. It alone is practical. It is older than the oldest seers and more practical than they. It is, in its naked elements, far older than the dawn of the birth of man; and, in its gaze into the reaches of the future, it leaves man's imagination hopelessly behind. Its inspiration and its source, its substance and its essence is the meekest and the most imperious, the sternest and the gentlest thing that enters into the making of the stuff of man. For the thing is Love.

Call it by what name we will, that which I have called socialism, defined and explained even with such brevity as is now only possible, is the great hope of humanity.

Socialism, then, stands for us to-day in its ideal, as Love; and the means of its realisation

are justice and kindness, both of which will count according to the measure by which they are pervaded with love. This, and this only, for me is Socialism ; and this, and this only, is the meaning that must be given to the word whenever I use it in all that follows—Justice, Kindness, Love. This is Socialism. Few things to-day may be easier than to call oneself a Socialist ; nothing is harder than to be one.

## CHAPTER II

### LIMITATION OF THE SUBJECT

I HAVE stated that my subject is limited to the two extremes of society in England to-day—those at the bottom, and those at the top. The main reasons for this limitation are as follows:

To begin with those at the bottom. In the case of the vast majority of those selected there will be no difficulty about the selection. The pitifulness of their condition and its injustice, and their helplessness, will be unquestioned. The fact that there is no difference of opinion regarding their condition and the shame incurred by the community owing to its continued existence, is of great importance. Moreover the sphere of action is narrowed, and we are thus rid of that sense of uncertainty and vagueness which frequently either prevents any action whatever, or so enervates it as to deprive it of most of its effect.

My main reasons for appealing solely to those at the top to come to the aid of those at the bottom are these.

In the first place, they are almost wholly responsible for the pitiable condition of those at the bottom. This statement is not intended to convey any reproach. It is simply and solely the statement of a fact. If the fact be doubted, I believe that a short historical investigation and some open-minded reflection will dispel all such doubts. Some further allusion will be made elsewhere to the subject; but, meanwhile, I think that in a few sentences the main gist of the argument upon which the statement rests may be set forth.

The deplorable condition of the very poor to-day is almost wholly the direct consequence of the modern industrial and commercial system. This system owes its inception and its continued maintenance almost entirely to the well-to-do—those at the top. But the results of the working of this system have a double significance, and this duality is specially significant here, and may be stated thus. The well-to-do at the top and the ill-to-do at the bottom owe respectively their extreme prosperity and their extreme penury to the establishment of this system. All sections of society between these two extremes

have been benefited or injured respectively to a greater or less degree. But in the case of these, the distinction cannot of course be made with anything like the definiteness that is possible with the two extremes. The corollary is clear. The class which has, without controversy, benefited the most by its own introduction of a particular system is surely bound to come to the aid of those who have been the most harmed by the system, with the introduction of which they, also without controversy, had nothing whatever to do. The system, with all its notoriously terrible consequences to them, was imposed upon them by others who, as the direct consequence of its introduction, have reached a degree of material prosperity unknown and unimagined in earlier times, with a corresponding depth of misery and destitution for those at the bottom, also in earlier times, both in its quantity and in its quality, unknown and unimagined. Will any fair-minded member of the upper classes hesitate to draw the inference?

Another consideration, and one of the very greatest importance, is that, if those at the top took in hand whole-heartedly this one single business—the remedying of the condition of those at the bottom—they could remedy it completely. This, at least, is my confident, absolute,

and never varying conviction. And if I am asked for the grounds of this belief, I reply that they rest upon my belief in the character of the stuff of which the vast majority of those at the top are made. And this brings me naturally to another of the reasons why my appeal is limited to those at the top.

They are, speaking generally, the class which I know best. And one of the constant happinesses of my life is that the better I know them, the more deeply do I believe in the potential and actual worth of their characters—provided always that this worth be allowed free and unimpeded exercise, and be not thwarted and overlaid, as I grieve to say it sometimes is, by weights and hindrances foreign to their true nature.

Further, the pitifulness of the condition of those at the bottom is well known and frankly admitted by those at the top. There is no difference of opinion among them as to this, though there is, doubtless, considerable difference in the warmth of the feeling evoked by the contemplation of it. Such difference of warmth is to be accounted for, of course, in various ways; but undoubtedly it is due largely to a difference in the really intimate, personal, face to face knowledge of the conditions under which the very poor live.

The last reason for this limitation is sad enough. The whole community has been appealed to, over and over again; and much has been, and is being, done in alleviation of the evil. But the evil itself is not only not cured, it is continually getting worse; and the most disturbing element in it all is that those who know it the most intimately seem both to believe that it is getting worse, and to have scarcely even a hope that the cure is within sight. And the suggestion is not unknown, that it is incurable.

This double limitation—the limitation of those who are to be helped and those who help—seems to have about it two elements, the combination of which does, I think, give good grounds for hoping for success in the final result.

There is, first, the peculiar fitness of the fact that those who have so much should help those who have so little. The other consideration is of a very different kind, but it is one that appeals especially to Englishmen, and is in harmony with much that is most characteristic in them. The proposal is limited and definite, and is capable of being set on foot with little delay, and its results would be readily tested and seen.

Such, then, are the main reasons which have induced me to propose this double limitation of the area of enterprise.

There is still something to add.

I have stated my complete and unvarying confidence that, if those at the top were wholeheartedly to take this business in hand, they would bring it to a successful issue. And this confident belief stands first and last as the supreme reason for limiting my appeal to those at the top, and limiting their effort to those at the bottom. For if they should succeed in their effort they will have conferred two absolutely inexpressible blessings upon the nation of which they are members.

They will, first of all, have wiped out a blot which stains and shames us all; and to have done this, and this alone, would have relieved us of a great oppression, would have given us a great lift and a new life. But they will have done much more than this. The blessings conferred would not be limited to a single nation, but would embrace humanity.

The million at the bottom are an extreme example, and to deal with them, therefore, is a matter of pressing urgency. And to have dealt with them successfully would be to have conferred an untold and immediate blessing upon them and upon us all. But the immediate blessings are as nothing compared with those that not only may, but must, follow in the

future. To have furnished an example, on a limited scale, of obedience to the promptings of some of the finest elements in human nature —justice, kindness, brotherhood, and the sense of human solidarity—would be of itself an achievement of infinite value. But if the enterprise undertaken within these strict limits be, as I am confident it may be, once successfully accomplished, there will hereafter be no bounds that can be set to the blessed consequences that will of necessity follow. The proposal is indeed limited, but it is only limited in order that it may be the first step in that which is limitless. As I never for a moment doubt that, if those at the top were wholeheartedly to undertake this great and difficult, but strictly limited, business, they would bring it to a successful issue, and would thereby confer upon the whole of the community an inexpressible blessing; so also am I equally confident that the example of this work done would be but the beginning of an end so full of blessing to us as a nation, and so full of rich instruction to humanity, that it will not do now to say even one single word about it all.

Let me for a moment restate the one great, bare, indisputable fact of the situation.

Here is a community composed of many millions of persons obedient to the ruthless system under which they live—the system of commercial competition. The lot of the immense majority of them is to fight and struggle with one another in the ceaseless strain and stress of the vulgarest warfare that has ever been waged. Among these people—so great and generous is their nature, so impossible has it been to dehumanise it—there is much love and little hate.

'Business—business is fighting with knives,' once said a business man to me. Yes, they struggle and they fight, and now one is under and now another. It is my turn to-day, but it may be yours to-morrow. For every dog has his day; and the turn of us all will come if we only stick to it and wait.

Whatever truth there may be in all this for the great majority of us, there is a small minority for whom it is not true at all. And this minority is composed of two parts, and to both of these parts such words are equally inapplicable.

With regard to the one part, with but few exceptions, they are never under, but are always above. They are so circumstanced that it is always their turn, yesterday, to-day, and to-

morrow. They are the dogs that have their day every day. They have arrived, and they remain.

With regard to the other part, taken as a whole and with no exceptions, they are never above, but are always under. They are so circumstanced that it is never their turn, yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow. Among them no dog has its day. Howsoever they may stick to it, and however long they may wait, their turn will never come. They never arrive.

Such is the composition of this small minority of the community—those at the top and those at the bottom. Whatever be the explanation, the bare fact stares us in the face. There is, by the hypothesis, on the one side, with quite few exceptions, unexampled prosperity, accompanied sometimes by wasteful and shameful superfluity. There is, on the other side, unexampled misery, accompanied always by wasteful and shameful deficiency. And the members of these two extremes of society have in their fate and fortunes only twice, and on each occasion only for a moment, any points of resemblance in their respective existences. They are alike at the moment of their entrance into life, and at the moment of leaving it. During the whole of the intervening period, however short or however

long, there is in their fortunes no single point of resemblance. The one extreme is always at the bottom, the other is always at the top. Would it not, unless we had known it to be otherwise, have seemed to be almost a sheer necessity that the one, out of its uniform and changeless abundance, should minister to the changeless destitution of the other?

How distant from one another are the members of these two extremes of society in England to-day, entirely owing to artificially manufactured barriers! And yet, how near to one another they are in all the elementary and essential gifts of nature! In all that is natural they are born the same, and in much that is natural—in almost all that is essentially human—they continue the same. Where they differ, the difference is due to the interference of society. Select indifferently a thousand new-born infants from the slums of London and a thousand from the mansions of the west, and shift them from east to west and from west to east, and what will be the result to them respectively as they continue their lives? The answer forms a terrible indictment against the whole community, but far the most terrible against that portion of it which is at the top. How is it, then, that being composed, as on the

whole the upper classes are, of such fine stuff, they have not long ago insisted upon righting this shameful wrong, and wiping out for ever this stain upon their character and honour?

My success in achieving my purpose—the remedying of the pitiful lot of those at the bottom—will depend in no small degree upon my ability to give a true reply to this question.

## CHAPTER III

### INACTION AND ITS CAUSES

Such, then, is the condition of these neglected people, such is the situation. It is fully known to the members of the upper classes, universally acknowledged, universally deplored by them, and yet remains unremedied. What are the causes of this paralysis of action?

There is, I believe, one great, fundamental cause almost enough of itself to account for it. This is, the insufficient realisation by the members of the upper classes of the injustice of the situation, and of the *quality* of the sufferings of those who suffer under it.

There are, doubtless, many other causes contributing more or less to the final disastrous result, and to some of them I shall call attention later on. But I believe that they are, in comparison with that just given, of little importance. For I am confident that if the members of the upper classes could but once come to a true realisation of the injustice, the unfairness

of the situation, and what this injustice means to those who suffer from it—that is, what is the *quality* of their sufferings—the whole thing would be as good as remedied and at an end. It really resolves itself, therefore, almost entirely into the consideration of the question of injustice. For along with this goes the consideration of the quality of the sufferings endured.

Such being my belief, the course that lies before me is plain and simple. I have to concentrate my efforts, first and foremost, upon the endeavour to prove to the members of the upper classes that the present situation is a clear infringement of human justice. For in truth almost everything turns upon this question of injustice. It is the beginning and the end of the whole thing, and I want to make this point quite clear at the outset.

The members of the upper classes, being as a body what I believe them to be, if once thoroughly convinced that the present condition of those at the bottom is a clear outrage upon human justice, is shamefully unfair, will, I believe, refuse any longer to leave it as it is. They will take the matter in hand with a resolute determination not to leave it until they have cured it.

Whilst I am fully aware of what hangs upon the success or failure of that upon which I now enter, I yet enter upon it not only with hope but with something like confidence. And I do so for the following reasons.

I have not a shadow of doubt myself in the strength of my case. That is, I have not a shadow of doubt that the condition of these people is a flagrant outrage upon human justice. Further, I am certain that I can make this fact clear to the immense majority of the members of the upper classes. This certainty is based not only upon the *a priori* consideration that, since the thing is perfectly clear to myself, and that under no circumstances do I ever doubt its truth, it seems reasonable to suppose that I can communicate the same certainty to others; it is based also upon actual experience. That is, I have found that every member of the upper classes to whom I have in conversation said what I had to say about the subject, has, with almost no exception, fully admitted that the situation outrages the sense of human justice.

And last—and it is impossible to exaggerate the weight that this has with me—my belief in the stuff and character of which the great majority of the upper classes is composed is so strong, that my confidence is great that if they

do, as a body, come fully and consciously to realise this injustice, *and to be conscious of their common and corporate realisation of it*, they will not rest until they have set the whole thing right.

## CHAPTER IV

### HUMAN JUSTICE

THERE is, perhaps, nothing which tends more to prevent the complete realisation of this outrage upon human justice than the vague and erroneous use of the word itself, when the whole subject is being considered.

It is not the first time that a hazy and, therefore, a wrong use of words has tended to prevent any action whatever, or to promote ineffectual action or action of the wrong kind.

I believe that confused and erroneous ideas on the subject of justice and injustice are responsible for a great deal of indecision and inaction, and mistaken action, with regard to the particular subject now under our consideration—the condition of those at the bottom in England to-day. I believe also that the substitution of clear and correct ideas about human justice would give to many persons an immense impulse towards effectual action.

The first thing, then, is to explain my use of the words 'justice' and 'injustice.'

It will be remembered that the title of this book is, 'Human Justice for Those at the Bottom'; and it is with *human* justice alone that we are throughout concerned. With ideal, abstract justice, as such, we have here nothing to do. Such justice has, we may believe, never yet existed in any human community. But in every human community there has always existed a rough-and-ready standard of justice, which tends to come nearer and nearer to the standard of ideal justice, and which has been recognised and conformed to by the members of the community. Moreover, the standard of human justice differs among different communities of the same period, and in the same community at different periods in its history. For example, the standard of human justice in England to-day differs from that in Turkey to-day. And the standard of human justice that exists in England to-day differs from that which existed in England a century ago. And it is to this last fact that I wish to draw close attention. The statement of the fact is a commonplace, but the full realisation of it is, I believe, very uncommon. To assist towards this full realisation will be one of my main en-

deavours, for the attainment of it is vital to my purpose.

I will define human justice as the standard of justice which satisfies the conscience of the majority of a community at any particular period in its history.

Now one of my main objects is to prove to the members of the upper classes that, in regard to this particular question of the condition of those at the bottom, human justice, according to this definition of it, is being outraged in England to-day. In other words, we are aware that the treatment that these people are receiving from us is unfair treatment, and treatment such as, when we look the facts fairly in the face, and when we look into our hearts and consciences, we cannot defend, because we know it to be unfair. Our standard of justice in many other matters is higher than it is in this matter of the condition of these people, and we have only to give the thing some thought, and to institute some comparisons, to know that this is so.

To take one example only. In our actual treatment of domestic animals our standard of human justice, of humanity, is higher in some respects than it is in our actual treatment of this particular section of human beings—the bottom section of society.

If it be the case that, in our neglect of these unfortunate people, we are acting contrary to the promptings of that which is best within us—the promptings of our consciences—we are *so far* in the worst, the most deadly, condition that can befall any community; that is, we are so far in a condition of decay, of moral rottenness. There is no escape from this conclusion. And in the case of the English people, the trampling on their consciences in the matter of human justice would, if persisted in, prove to be an example of the worst, the most deadly form of decay that has ever been witnessed in human history. It would be an awful instance of the truth of the hackneyed but most imperfectly realised words 'Corruptio optimi pessima'; and for this reason:

There is, I believe, no doubt that the best element in the character of a typical Englishman is his genuine desire to be fair and his genuine detestation of unfairness, and his success, on the whole, both as a private individual and as a member of the community, in putting these feelings into practice. As a pertinent illustration of all this, it was interesting to me the other day to read, in the report of a speech made by Prince Bülow in the Reichstag, that when he wanted to make clear to his audience something

that had to do with the subject of fairness, he had recourse to the English language, and used the expression 'fair-play.' And I don't know that I can use a better word to convey my meaning here. In the whole of our national life, not only in our sports, but in everything that concerns us as a nation—from trifles light as air to the most serious and critical situations—we do desire to see fair-play. But, once again, my contention is that, in this matter of the condition of these destitute people, we are most emphatically not seeing, and we know that we are not seeing, fair-play. And in this we have staring us in the face a startling example of 'Corruptio optimi pessima.'

It is undoubtedly the best part of the character and stuff of the English people that is suffering corruption, and this corruption means rottenness, and, in this case, rottenness in its worst form. We are trampling upon our consciences in regard to that which is most vital and most characteristic in us as a nation, our sense of fair-play, or, in other words, of human justice. And in so far as we are doing this, we are, both as individuals and as members of a community, in a diseased condition morally and socially, just as we should be physically, were the body attacked by a like disease. It is,

so far as it has penetrated, a moral and social gangrene.

All this, remember, is not in the least degree a question of metaphorical rhetoric, or high-sounding phrases, or anything of the sort. It is a question of stern, irrefutable, historical fact. It is a commonplace of history. The community that turns its back on that which is best in it, most typical of its best national qualities, is so far suffering from corruption, and is doomed, if the disease is not arrested, to ultimate decay.

Now, how do we stand in this matter, or, confining ourselves to the limits already prescribed, how do the members of the upper classes stand?

I have stated my belief that they are, as a body, aware of the fact that, in this matter of the condition of those at the bottom, they are doing violence to the instinctive promptings of their consciences in regard to human justice. But I hasten to add that they are, as a body, only vaguely, dimly, and half-consciously aware of it. Their condition in this respect ranges in all sorts of degrees, from a keen and gnawing sense of it in some, which is always at them and gives them no rest, down to almost, or even possibly quite, complete ignorance of the

whole thing. In the case of some, the sense of the outrage of human justice is almost unendurable, and, if conscience were to be finally stifled in these, deadly corruption would be inevitable. In the case of others, it may be that corruption has hardly begun; and in the case of those few—if indeed there are any such in existence—who are in complete ignorance of the facts, there would be actually no corruption, because there would be no violation of conscience. Taking the whole body together, and in the various degrees of their knowledge and ignorance, it certainly is my belief that they are still sound and healthy.

They are, indeed, aware of the condition of these destitute people, and are, therefore, by a necessary consequence, aware of the outrage upon human justice which is involved in the maintenance of such a condition. But—and this is the saving point—though they are aware of this, they are as yet, in most cases and as a body, only dimly and vaguely aware of it. And it is this very dimness and vagueness which is their apology. They have not yet, as a body, fully realised what it all means; and, not having done so, the uneasiness of their conscience is insufficient to force them to immediate and effective action. And it is my confident belief

that if they can, as a body, come fully to realise the situation as it is, they will be unable to do other than proceed to immediate and effective action.

But what *is* a full realisation of the injustice and pitifulness of the situation? Is there a single terse sentence that would summarise it for us?

There is a type of Englishman who, when moved to a certain point of indignation at witnessing or hearing of a situation of shameful injustice, would sometimes give utterance to his feelings, and say: 'It's a damned shame.' And very rarely would it happen that the man whose feelings found expression in such words would not proceed to action. Now this is the point of feeling to which all of us should be moved by the contemplation of the shamefully unjust condition of this million at the bottom.

I have elsewhere quoted words which described such a condition of things and proclaimed that it was destined to come to an end—'It is unjust, it cannot last.' But a man may quote these words with philosophic approval, and apply them to some particular form of injustice, and yet go on as he was, and take no steps to remedy the injustice. But alter a single word in the sentence and emphasise it, and we

have then the polite equivalent for the unparliamentary expression just quoted—'It is unjust, it *shall* not last.'

Such words—whether those of the less or the more polite phrase—do, I am sure, express the feelings of many members of the upper classes to-day at the shame of this particular outrage upon human injustice, and ought to express the feelings of them all—'It's a damned shame.' 'It is unjust, it *shall* not last.' Are your feelings on this subject such that they are represented by one or other of these two verbal expressions of them? If so, and if your feelings are shared by all the members of the upper classes, then all is right; success is ensured, and these neglected people will soon be neglected no longer. If not—then all is wrong, and these neglected people will, so far as you are concerned, go on being neglected.

All this is preliminary to what now lies before me. For what lies before me is to do what I can to make the members of the upper classes realise the fact, and no longer only dimly picture it, of the existence of a shameful unfairness, a shameful outrage upon human justice, now actually going on before our eyes in hundreds of thousands of cases, among those at the bottom of society in England to-day.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHILDREN

But before doing this I must call attention to one particular kind of injustice that stands by itself—the injustice to children. The existence of the injustice and its cruelty are unquestioned. There is no controversy here, and no difference of opinion. In this feature, as well as in some others, it is unique, and I should prefer, before entering upon matters that may give rise to differences of opinion and to controversy, to say something upon this matter, upon which there is no difference of opinion and no controversy. Moreover, there is, as will be seen, a special opportuneness in drawing attention to it just now.

Whatever differences of opinion there may be as to the innocence of the adult members of the poorest class who are sunk in the hopeless misery inseparable from their environment, there can be but one opinion as to the innocence of their children.

Much has been written and spoken regarding the terrible infant mortality among the poorer classes of the poorer districts of the cities of England. Exact statistics are quoted, and we are all more or less familiar with them. They are startling enough. If there were placed before us statistics of infant mortality excluding the poorer classes and the poorer districts, and dealing only with the poorest classes and the poorest districts, the statistics would be more startling still. But in this matter of infant mortality among the poorest classes there has been forced upon me a question, the mere possibility of the occurrence of which to anyone must surely stand solitary in the story of humanity. *Has it ever occurred to you to ask whether it is the children who die in infancy or those who survive that are more deserving of your pity?*

Answer this as you will, the condition of the children of the London slums—I confine myself now to this—is, and has been for a great many years, unexampled. It is unexampled in the sufferings that are imposed upon them from birth, and remain with them, if they are fortunate or unfortunate enough to survive, during the period of adult age. It is unexampled also in its indefinite and cruel prolongation.

The delay in remedying the whole thing is the more remarkable, because there is not the smallest doubt that those who are best fitted to discover and apply the remedy have both a large measure of knowledge of the injustice and misery of the situation, and a sincere sympathy with those who suffer under it, and a sincere desire to remove their sufferings. And yet—and this is the enigma—these innocent sufferings go on from year to year and from decade to decade, and, for all the knowledge of them and for all the sympathy with them, from year to year and from decade to decade they remain unremedied.

Let me draw attention to two groups of those whose knowledge of the situation and whose sympathy may both with equal certainty be taken for granted. It happens that at this particular moment a special point is given to my reference to them.

As I write, Parliament is reassembling.[1] Within its walls the same old scenes are being re-enacted on the same old stage. There is the King's Speech, with the inevitable criticisms on the one side, and the inevitable replies on the other. And in the course of a certain number of weeks—less or more according to the success of the tactics of the Opposition—the Govern-

[1] Feb. 1907.

ment will set to work to carry out the legislative programme of the session.

This time last year the legislative measure which was put in the forefront, and to the passing of which the Government devoted most of its time and energy, was a Bill for improving the education of the people. As it turned out, however, it became a battle-ground of the sects, and terminated its existence in the House of Lords. What more natural, therefore, than that the Government should include among their items of business an attack of some kind or other upon the House of Lords? Now it is quite clear that both these subjects—the education of the people and the present constitution of the House of Lords—are, each in its own way, subjects of vast interest and importance, and deserving of the most serious attention and prompt action on the part of those who are responsible to the people for the management of their affairs. If the present system of party politics could be swept away, and something more reasonable substituted for it, subjects of such national importance as these would long ago have been settled as satisfactorily as they could be settled by the disinterested efforts of the best men and the best brains that the country could find. But

with our long and dreary experience of the influence of party politics, what can we think are the prospects before us this session of anything really effective being done for the helpless people in the London slums—men, women, boys, girls, little children, and infants?

So long as the system of party politics remains as it is, so long will these poor people suffer, and, as far as Parliament is concerned, so long will their sufferings remain to a large extent not unheeded, indeed, but unhealed. Not unheeded certainly, for it would be a false and wicked aspersion upon the desires and sympathies of the individual members that compose the two Houses of Parliament, nay, more, upon the desires and sympathies of either of the two Houses as a collective assembly, to assert that the unrelieved sufferings and the maimed lives of these neglected people are unheeded by them. It is certainly not through indifference or callousness that session after session and decade after decade come and go, and that, so far as they and their sufferings are concerned, the Houses of Parliament might cease to exist, and they would be—well, what would they be—better off, or worse?

No; the fault of all this does not rest with the characters of the men who compose the two

Houses of Parliament, but with the *system* of party politics, which still prevails to blight the members of Parliament that submit to it, and to blight the country which, strangely enough, continues to submit to it also.

'The Opposition exists to oppose.' This is the part acknowledged and accepted by members of Parliament and by the country, taken up and zealously performed with only too complete success by that party in the State which does not for the time happen to be in office. And yet these men are, and from the very nature of the case must be, the chief national leaders.

Such is the cruel impotence, so far as concerns the sufferings of the poor, to which party politics have reduced Parliament to-day. Such, owing to party politics, is the spectacle that we are treated to inside its walls, while I am writing about the children.

And what at the same time is going on outside its walls?

The King's Speech contained no allusion to the question of women's suffrage. Stung therefore by this indifference to their claims, a large body of women, drawn apparently from all parts of the country, determined to force their way into the House of Commons to complain of this treatment. There was in readiness an army of

police to oppose their entrance. The women were desperately in earnest. The rank and file were stimulated to resistance by their officers, who are described as urging them on to persist in their object, with the cry of, 'Fight on, women!'

And fight on they did, with a persistency and pluck which, when fully roused, women always display. They of course met with the fate that must always await the few and the weak against the many and the strong, and in the course of a day or two half a hundred of them were lodged in Holloway Gaol.

Now, for my present purpose it would be a matter of indifference whether I happened to be in favour of granting the suffrage to women or against it. That is not now the point. I happen to be in favour of it, and it is therefore perhaps easier for me to say what I am going to say. Here we have a large body of women, representing the views of a vast number more, repeating this session, with the dogged perseverance of their race and the high enthusiasm of their sex, the efforts that they made last session to get within the walls of Parliament, and to lay their unsatisfied grievances before those whom they believe to be responsible for their treatment. Now it must be clearly understood that

the object of these women and of those whom they represent is high, and not selfish. Moreover, included in this object is a fervent desire to help the helpless poor.

Here is one of the utterances made by one of them in court, previous to her removal to gaol: 'I want to help the aged poor, the starving children, the sweated women.' And here is another: 'We will fight and fight until we get the vote.' Their aim and their determination are both splendid. One of their first endeavours, we may be quite certain, when they have got the vote, will be to relieve the shameful necessities of the necessitous poor. And they will fight and fight, as we are told and as we believe, till they get the vote—*till they get the vote*. Yes, but *when* will they get the vote? And what of these poor people *meanwhile*?

Might not these women who, in furtherance of their determined desire to be enfranchised, have, so far as this object is concerned, shaken themselves free from the paralysing grip of party politics, have been expected to see that they are postponing indefinitely the relief of the sufferings of these poor people which they so deeply desire to relieve? For they are postponing their own action to relieve them: first, till they have got the vote; and

second, till, through the medium of the members of Parliament whom they help to return, they persuade Parliament to do that which it has not done for all these years. And how long will it be before Parliament, if still under the grip of party politics, will be thus persuaded?

I am not, of course, for a moment suggesting that women should cease to fight for the vote, or to stop fighting till they get it. But is it an impertinence for me to suggest to them, as women, that they might perhaps be expected to fight, with equal doggedness and pluck, for the children and infants of the London slums, and to go on fighting till they have done for them what they would desire to do? I verily believe that, if the women of England were to bring with equal persistency and publicity before the people of England the shameful and cruel injury done to the children of the slums, not one single year would elapse before the prospects of these children would be brighter than have ever been the prospects of that long line of their innocent and suffering predecessors, from the first evil day when that evil thing, which we call a Slum, made its appearance.

Moreover, I will venture to assert the following belief. If the women of England were to fight to save the children with the same fervour

and with the same dogged determination as they are fighting to get the vote, they would not need to fight for the vote at all. The vote would be thrust upon them by the swift and overwhelming admiration of the whole nation. That which numberless societies, agencies, reports, committees, meetings, and I know not what, stirred to their work by warm sympathies and noble aims, and assisted in it by hosts of devoted individuals, have failed to do; that which Parliament, with all the resources at its command, has failed to do, has, let us suppose, been done by the women of England. And bear in mind, this is no hypothetical case resting upon a fanciful basis. It simply anticipates what might, if the women of England could only see things as they are, be any day an accomplished fact. The set determination of the women of England would have accomplished that which we have for all these years hoped, and hoped in vain, to see accomplished; and the foul blot of slum life, with all that this means for those children who in their innocence are condemned to live it, would have been wiped away.

For with that set determination the victory would be as good as gained, the thing would be as good as done. And if anyone doubts this, he only shows his ignorance of what the set

determination of the women of England, inspired by the holy ardour of feminine instinct and the resistless pity for doomed children, means.

And does anyone believe that those to whose wisdom and devotion the removal of this national shame was due would remain unenfranchised? I, at least, believe absolutely two things. I believe that if the women of England turned to the consideration of this cruel condition of the children of the slums, with the set determination that the thing should be remedied, the remedy would be found, with all the blessed consequences that would follow. I believe also that those to whom was due this blessed result would have the Parliamentary vote thrust upon them by the overwhelming impulse of a grateful nation.

It is by the merest coincidence that I happen to be writing at this moment on the subject of the condition of the helpless poor, when Parliament is assembling for a new session. At the same moment, both within and without its walls, those men and those women who do undoubtedly, all of them, both individually and collectively, feel the shame and the cruelty of the condition of the very poor, are in both cases having their attention diverted from it in-

definitely, largely owing to the intrusion of two great constitutional reforms, both of which will certainly be brought about some day, but probably only after much agitation and delay; and neither of which is necessary for the successful accomplishment of this one great social reform, the postponement of which means the continuance of a great national shame, and—worse than all—the continuance of much undeserved and preventible suffering.

I must not conclude what I have said about the self-imposed powerlessness of Parliament for dealing just now with this urgent social matter without calling attention to one incident of a very different kind.

One member of Parliament, at any rate, not only sees things as they are, but acts upon the vision, and acts of course for that body of members of which he is the spokesman.

From his remarks in the debate on the King's Speech made by Mr. Keir Hardie, I take the following words:

'I listened with a sinking heart to the cheers which greeted the Prime Minister's reference to the prospect of a tussle with the House of Lords. I sympathise with those cheers. But the first time I spoke in this House I appealed to the then Liberal Government, before proceeding

with highly controversial legislation, to try to call a truce of God with all parties for the purpose of social reforms touching the lives of the common people. You shall go on with your fight with the House of Lords, and you shall enjoy it, and in the end you shall win.

'It is no light task we are entering upon. No matter how moderate the reform proposed may be, it means years before it can be accomplished. Are the unemployed, and the aged poor, and the starving children to go on in their misery while this battle is being fought?

'I ask that this session, and before entering upon this conflict, we shall see that everything is done that can be done to make it possible for those who suffer in sorrow and in silence to have conditions applied to their lives worthy of human beings.'

They are noble and sagacious words, and I reproduce them here with an expression of gratitude to the man who uttered them. What effect did they have upon the House of Commons?

This problem of the children is very difficult and very complicated, and no one who has given it serious consideration will be inclined to dogmatise about its treatment. It has been recently a great deal before the country. One aspect of it has been specially emphasised by the

zealous action of a newspaper. The articles in the *Tribune*, under the head of 'The Cry of the Children,' and the various meetings held with the direct object of considering that one special aspect, have not unnaturally had the result of inducing many persons to consider the whole question of the problem of the children, in addition to the special subject to which their attention was called. Owing to one cause or another, there is no great social subject which the people of this country are more anxious just now to deal with effectually than this. I venture to suggest one simple means by which it could be dealt with effectually, and with as little delay as possible.

Let the women of England make it the one great business of their lives to take up this subject, with the resolution that they will not lay it down until they have remedied the evils that have to be remedied; and let the House of Commons pass a resolution that the subject shall be dealt with entirely outside the range of party politics.

The passing of these two resolutions would be the beginning of the end of this pitiful condition of the children; and to have achieved this end would have been an incalculable blessing. But it would be the beginning of much more than this.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

The upper classes do not fully realise the injustice of the situation, largely because they are not fully aware of the revolutionary process that has been going on among us. This revolution has profoundly and permanently affected the lives, thoughts, and outlook of the English people, both as individuals, and as groups, sections, classes of the community. But its influence is not limited to this. It extends also to the relations and attitudes of different classes to one another, and profoundly affects and disturbs these. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the effect of it all is universal and incalculable. And the revolutionary process is seen in its extreme degree in its effects upon the relations of those at the top and those at the bottom of society. Some reference therefore to this fact is a necessary preliminary to any appreciation of things as they are.

During the last fifty years there has taken place in England a social revolution which, in its combined extent and swiftness, is unique in our national history. And the strange thing is that this astonishing revolution, with its endless ramifications and quite infinite consequences, seems almost completely to have escaped the notice of those among whom it has occurred. A great deal of what is so lamentable in our present social condition is due, I believe, to our failure to appreciate the full significance of all this.

It is, of course, impossible for me to do more now than draw attention to the fact with the utmost brevity; but it would be equally impossible to pass it by unnoticed. For it is to some of the elements in this revolution that the situation owes much of its peculiar point. Without some appreciation of what this revolution is, and what it means to us as a nation, it is impossible to have any right appreciation of our present social condition, or to have any chance of suggesting a reasonable remedy.

The whole subject is full of fascinating interest. All that I can do now is to draw attention to a few outstanding points that specially illustrate it.

Fifty years ago the influence of the Feudal System was still a great factor in the social life

and condition of England. To-day it has practically ceased to exist. It has flourished and perished within the recollection of persons, many of whom may still be counted among the middle-aged.

The causes contributing to this are many. The two main causes are the increased and ever-increasing facilities for locomotion; and the increased and ever-increasing stress laid upon national education, resulting at last in the Education Act of 1871. Without the precedence of the former, the oncoming of the latter might have been indefinitely delayed, but by itself the former would have been powerless; for the vitalising and fundamental factor in the revolution is the education of the people. And the social revolution was imposed by the law of the land and made inevitable when, about thirty-five years ago, Parliament imposed upon all members of the community, including the very poorest, the obligation of having their children educated, and undertook to see that this obligation was met.

The revolutionary effects of this Act were not foreseen a generation ago; nor have they ever, from that day to this, been adequately recognised. But the plain fact is that the Compulsory Education Act of 1871 contained within

it that which was destined in a few years to demonstrate the dead and inhuman artificiality of social differences and class distinctions. It has rendered the whole thing an impossible anachronism. It is of itself a solvent ingredient, intensely penetrative, and permeating all society. But it has done, and it is, much more than this. It has opened the eyes of those upon whom the lot has been imposed to pass a starved and stunted existence, deprived of the elementary requirements of a human life. It has opened their eyes and has shown them their nakedness. But here the comparison stops. In these days the people have indeed had their eyes opened to see their nakedness, but the sight of it has not made them ashamed. It has unsettled, it has puzzled them ; and it has made them—though still frequently only half consciously—indignant.

This has been the effect produced upon those at the bottom of society. The fact is significant enough, and the fulness of its significance will be appreciated in proportion to the fulness of our acquaintance with it. It would, however, be far less significant than it is if it stood alone ; if the disintegrating effects of the revolution were limited to the bottom section of society. But this is not so.

During the last half century those also who are at the top have been similarly affected; they too are restless, disturbed, uneasy. And the best of them, as was to be expected, are the most deeply affected. And this is a factor of the utmost interest and importance.

The two facts, then, which, if we are to have any chance of realising the true position of things, we must bear carefully in mind, are these:—

1. There is a constantly increasing sense of dissatisfaction, rising to indignation, in the bottom section of society, at what seems to them to be the injustice, the unfairness of their treatment.

2. There is a constantly increasing uneasiness of conscience in the top section of society, proceeding from their sense of the injustice, the unfairness with which the bottom section is treated.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION—(*continued*)

CIRCUMSTANCES gave me somewhat exceptional opportunities for observing the social conditions prevalent in the early days of this period, the days immediately preceding the actual stir of the revolution itself.

During the whole of my boyhood I was educated at one of the old Grammar Schools in a small country town. The school was a free school, and the boys who frequented it were drawn indifferently from all sections of society in and around the little town, and the effect produced upon us all was marked. We mixed freely with one another, and learnt to understand one another in a way and to a degree quite impossible if we had not thus known one another. I have treated this subject in some detail elsewhere, in a little book to which the reader may refer if he cares to pursue the subject.[1]

[1] *Suggested Reforms in Public Schools.* By C. C. Cotterill, M.A., Assistant Master at Fettes College, Edinburgh. William Blackwood & Sons. 1885.

Meanwhile, I cannot forbear saying that the alterations introduced into these schools in the early seventies, in consequence of the Report of the Royal Commission, swept away one of the most valuable means for promoting knowledge and good fellowship among the members of different sections of society, and substituted a system which had no such end in view at all. And this was a great mistake.

Defects undoubtedly existed in the constitution of many of the old grammar schools ; but it is hard to believe that these defects could not have been remedied without doing away with the immense social benefit which was bestowed upon all members of the schools alike by the free mixture of all sorts and conditions of boys that frequented the schools. It was at any rate largely owing to this particular fact that I gained a more easy, familiar, and intimate knowledge of the poorer members of society in those days than would have been possible under the usual conditions of modern school life.

The social conditions of the place and neighbourhood in which I passed my boyhood about fifty years ago—and I have no reason to believe that there was anything exceptional about them —were as follows :

The upper classes, represented largely by the squires and parsons, were classes apart. They were almost invariably kind to the poorer people, and their kindness was often devoid of condescension.

The poorer people were also a class apart. They might, or they might not, look up to the persons above them—this would depend on the character of the latter—but, whether they did so or not, they never had the smallest doubt in their own minds that between themselves and these persons there was a gulf fixed, and fixed that gulf would always be. And so it was with the persons above. They too were aware of the gulf, and they too never questioned its finality. But the thing went deeper than this. In both cases not only was the gulf regarded as final, but it was regarded as just.

I need hardly turn aside for a moment to say that at that time, as at all times, scattered here and there throughout the community there would be, both at the top and at the bottom, stray and exceptional individuals who recognised, and sometimes gave voice to the recognition, that such a dividing gulf was neither final nor just. Occasionally such a voice made itself heard with such effect that history tells us the tale of it. But usually it produced apparently

little lasting effect. For it is incontrovertible that fifty years ago, despite certain notorious outbursts, the country as a whole was still under the grip of the Feudal System, the very essence of which is the existence of a superior and an inferior class, the superiority and the inferiority of which are taken for granted by both as a fixed and immutable law of the very being of man, unquestioned, final, just. Its supposed immutability and finality had entered so deeply into the hearts and minds both of those at the top and of those at the bottom, that it had not as yet occurred to them to question its justice. The justice of such an arrangement was, of course, in the abstract questionable, but it remained for them still unquestioned. And for them therefore there was still no injustice, from the simple fact that there was no *sense* of injustice. And this fact cannot be too carefully borne in mind.

Speaking generally, then, fifty years ago the inequalities between rich and poor occasioned neither to the rich nor to the poor any sense of injustice, and were, therefore, for them not unjust. The Feudal System, so far as concerned the top of society and the bottom, held almost complete sway over these two extremes as short a time as fifty years ago. But to-day the

attitude of both towards these inequalities is profoundly changed.

I will give two examples illustrative of this change that have come under my own notice. The first illustrates the period of transition, the second brings us close down to to-day.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION—(*continued*)

About thirty years ago, walking one day in the country roads, I came across a machine that the stone-breakers use for breaking stones upon. It stood by the road side, desolate and forsaken. The man who had been using it had left it standing in the road, where, apart from him, it seemed only out of place and in the way. But though he had departed, he had not left it without leaving behind some evidence of his recent presence. Traced in chalk upon the front of it, in the childish hand that is characteristic of all ages alike among those who write rarely and with difficulty, and with the phonetic spelling of nature, were these words:—'This mashean to end my days.'

Here was the machine. But where was the writer of the inscription? With what feelings and under what circumstances had the hand, so well used to the breaking of stones, so ill used to the making of letters, traced these few words,

and left them for the chance passer-by to read? What purpose did he think they would serve? The inscription was anonymous and undated, but external evidence pointed to a recent date, for the chalk was still fresh and untouched by the elements. Did the writer feel when he wrote, 'This mashean to end my days,' that the work had been too much for his failing strength, and that he had at last been forced to leave it, and believed that the actual end of his life was near? Had he, in writing these words, been writing his own epitaph, and would the words have been with equal appropriateness inscribed, with a representation of the machine, upon his tombstone? Did he as he wrote these words feel that he had left the dumb partner of his toil standing forlorn in the road, and that he was going home to die?

Or do the words admit of another, though a similar, explanation? Did the old man feel that, though the end of his actual existence might be indefinitely delayed, yet, with the ceasing of his work upon the road, any life really worth the name, really worth living, would cease also? His life upon the road had at least contained one element, the existence of which for many a man and woman alone makes life worth living, and the non-existence of which does for them really

make their lives simply a more or less dreary waiting for death. It had contained the element of liberty. He and his machine had for some time worked together on the road. The life had been hard, and it did not get less hard with the increase of years. But it had been a human life, the life of a free man, and it had in it attractive features. He and his machine were known to the passers-by, and friendly greetings were interchanged. There was some liveliness and stir and some humanity about it, and, with and above it all, there was the sense of freedom. And as each day comes to an end he goes home, and whatever his home is, it has also the one saving element in it—the element of liberty. But now that he says good-bye to his machine, and leaves it and its inscription behind, does he feel that, with the disappearance of his means of living, there must disappear also the last vestige of real life, of free life—there must disappear his home? For does he too, like many another independent old man and woman, regard the homeless home of the poor, the Workhouse, with such an instinctive shrinking and dread that it is for him death itself, or something worse?

What was it that he was looking forward to when he wrote those words? To an end to the days of his natural life in the grave, or to an end

to the days of his life of liberty in the Workhouse? We do not know. But one thing we do know, and it is the knowledge of this one thing that alone gives point just now to his weary words. When he wrote them and left them to be read by the passers-by—friends, acquaintances and strangers—he wrote them with a distinct feeling in his mind, and with the express intention that this feeling should be conveyed by him to all who might read them. He had in his mind a sense of injustice, a sense of revolt; and he was determined, as he felt the end of his days to be near at hand, to take his last chance, whilst he was still on the road, still going, still free, of setting forth his feelings as to his treatment, and of leaving them in the place that seemed to him most public, for all who passed by to read. This sense of injustice may indeed have been mixed. Exactly what was passing through his mind when he took up the bit of chalk and painfully traced the childish letters, we do not know. It doubtless implied that the work which, along with his machine, he had had to do, had, at any rate in these failing years, been too hard for him.

But whatever it implies or does not imply, it makes one thing clear to us. It was, we may presume, his last, as it quite possibly was his first, public message; and it was a message of

protest. In it he protested to society against his treatment, and he made his protest as public as he could make it. And his instinct in making it public was a true instinct. That is, his treatment not only seemed to him to be unfair, but it was unfair; and in making his protest against it he was simply following a true instinct which he had no right to resist, and was performing in his own way and by his own means a duty to society.

This, then, is an example of the utterance of a feeling of revolt and of a sense of injustice in an early stage of its development. In its verbal expression it may be ignorant, and vague, and dim. But there is no ignorance, nor vagueness, nor dimness in the mind of the man whose clumsy fingers traced his farewell message. He was quite clear that somehow or other he had been badly, unjustly, unfairly treated. And surely anyone who reads what he wrote will be no less clear on the point than he was.

As an example of the sense of revolt in its nascent stage, it has always had for me, and I think it will have for others, an interest of its own. But much about the meaning of the words, and everything about its author, must be conjectural; and I fully recognise this.

The next example is very different. It is a

generation later in time; and in these thirty years much has happened.

In a political club of a stirring country town it was arranged that a debate should be held at which the question was to be discussed as to which political party was most likely to promote the interests of the people. The debate was opened by a member of that political party which represented the views of the club, and it is needless to say that his aim was to prove that the interests of the people would be best promoted by the party which he represented. The opposition was led by a socialist. The debate lasted some hours, and the speeches were such as were to be expected on such an occasion, and call for little comment. There were evidences on both sides of considerable knowledge, interest, intelligence, and ability. The speakers, a large majority of whom were members of the working class, bore striking testimony to the effects produced by the passing of the Compulsory Education Act about thirty-five years earlier. Previous to that date, such a debate in such a town would have been an utter impossibility.

The debaters were educated men. Indeed, in so far as concerns an intelligent knowledge of social and political questions and the capacity to

speak about them with good sense and in clear language, they were better educated than are a large majority of the members of the well-to-do classes. This is a fact of much significance. The whole intellectual level of the working men of this town had been immensely raised, largely owing to the Compulsory Education Act. Their intellectual activity, their knowledge of facts and their power of making use of them, placed them on a level with the members of the well-to-do classes. In such matters as these there was no upper class and no lower. The two classes were on the same plane, excepting that undoubtedly in some subjects of the deepest interest and most vital importance to the country the members of the upper and lower classes had changed places. That which was socially lower was intellectually higher. I emphasise all this just now, as the emphasis comes naturally out of the situation, and the digression seemed inevitable.

As the debate proceeded there stood up a working man, below, as he seemed to me, rather than above the average type of those present, in intelligence and alertness. He was quite ordinary in every way, but with a certain thicksetness and determination in his general appearance and countenance. He spoke very

briefly, and as though he was not accustomed to speak, but felt it incumbent upon him to relieve his mind of something which was in it. There was not the smallest attempt to make anything that he said acceptable to those who listened to it. All that he seemed to desire was to utter something within him that he wanted to get rid of, wanted to state to those present. There was no preamble and no conclusion. Having stated the one fact, having got rid of it, having relieved his mind, he sat down abruptly. This is what he said :

'I am a working man. I have a wife and children. I work with my hands, and live from hand to mouth. Some day, sooner or later, I sha'n't be able to work any longer, and when that time comes, I shall have to go to the Workhouse. What I have now to ask is—is this just?' And he sat down.

This man was, as I have stated, so far as I could judge, intellectually below the average type of the other working men who took part in the debate. He gave no evidence whatever of exceptional intelligence, ability, knowledge, or powers of speech. But what a gulf there was between this generation and that of the old stone-breaker, with his 'This mashean to end my days.'

Could there be imagined a contrast more startling, more sudden, more swift?

On the one side, the lonely road, the bit of chalk, the childish scrawl, the perishableness of the material, the vagueness of the utterance, the uncertainty of its reaching its mark, the anonymity of its author, his age, his helplessness, his despair. On the other, the political club-room full of people, the knowledge, the ability, the keenness, the modernity of the speakers; the clearness, directness, purposefulness, vigour of this particular speaker, his youth and the resources at his back.

Yes, the contrast is startling, for the whole thing has taken place within a single generation. But the gist of the utterance of the two men and the sting of it are the same. And the message itself is the same also. 'I work with my hands, and live from hand to mouth. Some day, sooner or later, I sha'n't be able to work any longer, and when that time comes, I shall have to go to the Workhouse.' These words of the young man of the younger generation might just as well have been used by the old man of the older generation. And the sting of it, both for them and for us, is expressed equally by both. 'This mashean to end my days' is but another mode of expressing the same sense of unfairness as that expressed

by the three last words of the younger man, when he turned upon his audience and asked them, 'Is this just?' And that is the question wherein the sting lies for us too—*Is this just?*

Apply whatever tests we may to the condition of things prevailing to-day at the bottom and at the top of society, the result is always the same. It is always, that it is unjust. Take the two extremes in the mass and compare them, or take any two single individuals from the mass and compare them, and the result is always the same. It will be found that the comparison—subject, of course, to the proverbial exceptions—always establishes injustice.

Let us take the most inward and personal test conceivable. Let any of us take his own case, and compare the conditions and circumstances of his own life with those of anyone whom he knows in the lower class. Of all these cases there will not be five in a hundred where the result of such a comparison will not establish the fact of the existence of grievous injustice in the case of the member of the lower class. But all these hypothetical cases may seem, perhaps, somewhat in the air, and if there is anything I want to avoid it is statements that are in the air. Instead therefore of limiting myself to an expression of opinion as to what would be the

results of such individual comparisons, I will institute a comparison between two actual cases, and leave the reader to form his own conclusions as to the result. I will state my own case, and compare it with the case of this working man.

This is his case. 'I am a working man. I work with my hands, and live from hand to mouth. Some day I shall be able to work no longer, and then I shall have to go to the Workhouse.'

And now for mine. He was young, and dealt therefore only with the present and future. I am not young, and deal therefore mainly with the past. 'I was a schoolmaster. I worked with my head. The day came when I could work no longer, and I am now provided with all that is necessary for living a human life.'

There should be no question here of the *kind* of work done, hand or brain. Granted the due performance of it, the only question should be as to its reward. Was the reward *just*? Less than just mine certainly was not, and as certainly his was. This is all that concerns us now, and it is enough.

I will assume that so long as we were able to work, he with his hands, I with my head, we worked usefully. I have no right to assume that the work of either of us was the better done.

His may have been better done than mine, or mine than his; but that is not the point. For the purpose of comparison we must assume equality in this respect. But there the equality ends.

He ended his statement with the words, 'What I have now to ask is—is this just?' And with the same words I will end mine. What I have now to ask is—is this just? The question, in one form or other, is constantly asked in these pages; and, whether it is asked or not, the idea which underlies it is always present. And it is particularly pertinent here.

From what has been written above and from the concrete examples selected to illustrate it, I hope that sufficient has been done to make one or two points clear. Before I leave the subject, let me emphasise these points and summarise it all.

Within a single half century a social revolution has occurred in this country which has completely transformed society. The social gulf which at the beginning of it existed, and seemed likely to exist indefinitely, between the upper classes and the lower has, in all its really essential elements, at the end of it disappeared. There is now no real, natural, essential, social difference. Many causes have contributed to

the production of this final result. But of these the facilities for locomotion and for education are so transcendent that they may for all practical purposes be regarded as of themselves controlling the situation. And of these two it will be at once apparent that the education of the people is infinitely the more powerful. It stands alone in its very nature, in its reach, its possibilities, its pervasiveness, its formative and its solvent qualities, its subtlety, its absolutely incalculable influence upon the individual and upon society. In these respects and in numberless others it has already played a part, and is destined to play an ever-increasing part, in the social revolution, which makes its place in it unique. And in its immediate relation to our present subject it has a special significance. The education of the people came to be regarded as a matter of such supreme and vital importance, that it was by the community a generation ago compulsorily imposed upon its members, and subsequently was made free. That is, whereas education before that period was a matter of choice and a question of expense, and was consequently neglected by the indifferent and the necessitous, it was now made compulsory and universal. And it is necessary for me here to draw special attention to one feature in it.

The education that was made compulsory and free was what was called Elementary Education. It did not touch then, and it hardly touches now, what is called Secondary Education. It did not, in other words, interfere with the well-to-do classes. It concerned itself only with the poorer classes. And lastly, and with special reference to this subject, it was imposed upon all the members of the poorer classes, including the very poorest. The significance and the reach of this has, somehow or other, escaped the notice of us as a nation. The more prosperous portion of the community—for it is they who carried the movement through in 1871—imposed upon the poorer classes, including the very poorest members among them, the obligation of being educated. If the very poorest portion of the community had been left to itself, its children would have received no education at all. The very means for taking advantage of the opportunities offered were absent, even if there had been the desire to take advantage of them. For without money there were no means; and, by the hypothesis, there was no money. The impossibility of the situation was soon recognised, and along with compulsion followed its necessary corollary, and the schools became free.

The consequences of all this were not anticipated then, and are only very partially perceived now.

Given the conditions that exist in England—the condition of democracy, of a passionate love of liberty and a sincere love of justice—there remained but one more condition to be satisfied, in order to place the whole people within a single generation upon terms of equality in all that is essential and fundamental in the character of a human being. And this single condition was satisfied at the moment when the Queen signed her name to the Compulsory Education Act of 1871.

For many years previous to that moment the soil had been prepared and was waiting for the seed. At that moment the seed was sown, and the sowing has continued ever since. The fruits indeed are not yet fully realised, either in quantity or in quality; for the seed is of such a nature that the results of the sowing of it falsify and defy all anticipations. One single generation of Compulsory Eudcation has produced many effects; and of these the most striking and the most revolutionary is that it has once and for ever obliterated the dividing line of essential social distinctions, and has placed every member of the community upon terms of

essential social equality. But here comes in the cruelty of the limitation. The equality stops there. We have forced the people, down to the very poorest of them, to receive the enlightenment of education, with all that this may mean. We have held out to them the possibility of reaching all those heights which are accessible to the duly prepared mind, but we have at the same time rendered it almost impossible for them to reach them.

It is of such vital importance that I should make this fact quite clear, that something must still be added to what may perhaps seem to have been already treated at disproportionate length. If I can but once succeed in making this fact clear, what lies before me will be full of hope. If not, the thing may be much more difficult.

It is quite usual to hear the educated classes spoken of as synonymous with the upper classes. And it is at the same time tacitly assumed that the lower classes are uneducated. Now it is of course true that the upper, that is the richer, classes devote on the whole much more time in the earlier portion of their lives to education than do the lower, that is the poorer, classes. It is also true that, in the prosecution of their respective callings, members of the well-to-do classes

are on the whole—but with many exceptions—concerned more with things that exercise the mind than are members of the poorer classes. All this lies on the surface, and lying there is patent to everybody. But if we look below the surface we see something very different.

We usually take it for granted to-day, as we took it for granted fifty years ago, that, in spite of all that has taken place meanwhile, the differences between the poorer and the richer classes are still fundamental, and not, as they really are, superficial. I not only believe that this view is entirely mistaken, but I believe that it is very largely due to the mistaken holding of it that the well-to-do classes are prevented from taking such immediate and effective action as would once and for ever sweep away from among us the shame of the pitiful condition of the very poor to-day.

It is true that by their education, their occupations, their amusements, their external manners, their dress, their appearance, their speech, and various other distinctions more or less noticeable, the richer classes are still to a greater or less degree, according to the individuals that are compared, superficially distinguished from the members of the poorer classes. But the distinction is to-day almost

wholly superficial. In almost everything that really matters, the members of the two classes stand to-day on practically equal terms. Where they do not, that which distinguishes them is immaterial and of absolutely no human value. Though I may be mistaken in giving so large a place in this result to the education of the people, about the result itself there can be no mistake. And if there are any to whom this is not evident, it only means that, for some reason or other, they cannot, at present, see below the surface. What has produced the blindness, or what would correct it, is another matter. That it is the blindness of ignorance, and not of wilfulness, I believe. And since ignorance can be more readily enlightened than wilfulness, the future is more hopeful.

One of the causes of this ignorance is, as I have explained elsewhere, the existence of the methods of education prevalent among the well-to-do classes, from its very start in their childhood to its end in the universities. Their schools and their colleges are extreme types of class schools and class colleges. And this blinding process is all the more deadly and difficult to correct because it begins so early and extends over so many years. Their education begins and ends by being *exclusive*. And

this factor in their lives greatly contributes to making it so difficult for the well-to-do to see social things as they really are. But meanwhile the social revolution has been proceeding before our very eyes with startling clearness, if we could but see it. The causes of this revolution are many, and are only of importance here in so far as their recognition would help to open our eyes. Compulsory education; the daily papers, to which most of the eminent men of letters contribute; the works of the greatest minds of the past purchasable for a few pence; free libraries and free reading-rooms, free picture galleries; endless clubs and societies for discussion and debate; and, last and most important, sufficient leisure, owing to the restriction of the hours of the working day—these and many other causes have combined to produce the final result. And the final result, briefly restated, and with no further reference to points of possible difference, is this.

The poorer and the richer classes are to-day, in all the large essentials that go to make worthy members of the great family of humanity, practically identical. In their capacities for suffering and for joy; in their appreciation of beauty, the beauty of nature, and the beauty of art in

all its manifestations; and, above all, *in their aspirations*—in all this the poorer and the richer classes to-day are on practically identical terms. Moreover—and this it is that essentially differentiates the position as it is to-day from what it was in earlier times—the poorer classes, as a body, are aware of all this. That is, they are in all these capacities practically identical with the upper classes, and *they know that they are.* But there is one difference, and the difference is cruel. The difference is the lack of the means of satisfying their aspirations and developing their faculties. And at the root of this lies mainly the difference in their respective deficiency or plenty of available money.

Is it necessary to add that such a statement is made with the full knowledge that money is very far from being or doing everything? This does not touch the argument here, which is, that without a certain minimum of money, *and of what this implies*, the development of what is best within you is, in almost all cases, impossible.

Of this wealth the well-to-do, on the whole, have a great and hurtful superfluity, and the poor have a great and hurtful deficiency. It is but another illustration of the fact that always comes to light when we compare the conditions

that prevail to-day in England at the top and at the bottom of society. It illustrates the presence of a shameful injustice, unfairness, as between these two extremes.

I have now one question to ask: Have I so far carried my readers with me? That is—setting aside differences as to matters of detail, explanations of causes, and so on—are they in agreement with the essential and fundamental conclusion that has been summed up in the last page or two? If so, what lies before me will be much simplified. If not, I still go on in hope. For I am confident that some of my readers will be already in complete, and many in partial, agreement with me. And of the remainder I find it difficult to believe that they will not come into at any rate something like a working agreement, if they read and reflect upon what is to follow.

## CHAPTER IX

### EXAMPLES OF INJUSTICE

I HAVE given, as a necessary condition of any true appreciation of the present situation, a sketch, in barest outline, of the amazing revolution that has been pursuing its almost unnoticed course among us in recent times. With the view of aiding the realisation of it, I have added certain concrete illustrations that came under my own observation. And I have shown that, whatever may be the differences that separate such examples, there is in all of them one persistent, uniform element. The element of injustice is never absent.

It remains for me now, in pursuance of the same plan, to give some concrete examples, from my own personal knowledge, designed to illustrate the existence of the same injustice, by cases such as are to be found in hundreds of thousands within the area of London alone. I shall preface them with but one remark. They are typical, average, ordinary, unsensational

instances; and to this very fact is due a good deal of the value of the deductions that will be drawn from them.

Multitudes of devoted men and women are working in London to-day to do what they can to relieve the necessities and miseries of the very poor. Some of these live on year after year in a couple of rooms in the very midst of the people among whom they work, and become completely identified with them. They are perfectly happy among them; they would be miserable away from them. They are their friends and their equals; there is no condescension on the one side or obsequiousness on the other. If you wish to see something of the very poor in a quite natural and simple way, to make their acquaintance, to be on terms of friendly and familiar equality with them, to know something of the real condition of their lives, and to do all this without impertinence, and with the knowledge that what you see and hear will be just that which actually exists, with no colouring and no exaggeration, you will best accomplish your wish if you can go as the friend of one of these friends of the poor.

With one of these devoted women, on a day towards the end of November, in one of those cities of the east which are lumped together

under the general title of the 'East End,' I walked about in the poor streets of the poor district which had been her home for many years. She knew and loved the people who dwelt in them, and though there is no need to be assured that such love is returned, I happened to have some talk with a woman who had known her for many years, and her simple eloquence left no doubt of the magic of such a love as this.

Let me tell of what I saw and heard in two houses which I visited with her. She introduced me as a friend, and we were all of us at once on terms of pleasant and easy familiarity. There was nothing formal in these visits; everything that I saw and heard was simple, natural, spontaneous, unembarrassed, and friendly. I was not a reporter nor an interviewer, but simply a friend of their friend, and was treated as such, with that easy and unconscious courtesy which is so characteristic of these people, and which owes its charm to their humanity and their naturalness.

In the first house were a mother and daughter, who were both making coarse shirts for a London firm. The mother's part in the business was the making of the buttonholes and the sewing on of the buttons. The daughter

made the shirts, and used a sewing machine for the purpose. There was upon her that terrible stamp of the sense of being hard driven, the hunted look—a look that I do not think any one can convey in words to another. It possessed her, and the sight of it possessed and possesses me ; but through the frail medium of words I know I cannot convey it to others, and I will not try. Some of you may have seen it, and if you have, you will not have forgotten it. The mere statement that it was in this girl's face, and above all in her eyes, will be enough. Not for one single moment did she stop her work during the time we were there, but she looked up at us once or twice, and that was enough. It really was the pitiful, wistful look of a hunted and defenceless animal. That was what it was to me then as I caught her eye, that is what it is to me now as I see it again.

The mother talked as she worked. She said her eyes were giving her some trouble. Of course, if they failed her, there would be an end to her share in the work. The daughter did not speak a word.

The pay per dozen which was given to the mother and daughter respectively for their share in the making of the shirts was told us by the mother, and told merely as a fact, without com-

ment. I will not pass on the information; I see no good in doing so. It would be but to add another item to the long list of thousands upon thousands of similar cold and cruel statistics, whose cruelty seems hardly noticed, partly, I suppose, owing to their coldness, and partly to their familiarity. The mere familiarity with such shocking facts and figures may be actually worse than ignorance. It is worse than ignorance if it does not lead to action. For the greater the familiarity without action, the more difficult does it become to rouse to action; and as my desire is to rouse to action, I will not increase the familiarity. It must suffice to say that this particular example of a home industry would certainly take a high place among those industries that are called 'sweated.' The pay that these two received for a dozen completed shirts would of itself more than account for the hunted look in the girl's face and eyes. It was a fierce fight that the two were fighting—I will not say for life, for this would be a degradation of the word—but to keep their bodies alive; and it was clear enough that they were aware of it. There was a fireplace in the room in which they were working, but there was no fire in it, and it was near the end of November. The girl's fierce energy may, perhaps, have kept her warm

if she had food enough to feed the fire. But it was a dreary room, and the mother looked sad enough, and might well have been cold enough. Her face would have appealed to a sculptor; there was a certain nobility, a sort of Roman dignity, about it. It was a noticeable, matronly face, with a cast of melancholy, but no bitterness.

What is the destiny that awaits these two? Will the mother lose her eyesight and her earnings? And if she does, what will she do, and what will her daughter do? The struggle for existence was fierce and precarious enough with their efforts combined. What will it be when there are still two to be fed and only one pair of hands to provide the food?

Will the mother separate herself from the daughter, and make her last home in the waste and dreary homelessness of a workhouse? Or does this quiet and dignified woman shrink, with what we know is a not uncommon abhorrence, from this fate, and does her daughter share the shrinking? Nay, would it be possible for the daughter alone and unaided to keep up the present home? Will they, then, contrary perhaps to logic and to reason, elect to stay where they are from week to week, not to be separated, not to go to the workhouse, but to stand or fall

together? Yes; having seen them in their home, having seen the demeanour of the mother and listened to her as she talked, and having watched the daughter at her work and seen the look in her eyes, this is, I think, the conclusion they are most likely to come to. And having come to it, what, again, will be their fate? How long will they stand together, how long will it be before they fall? And if they fall, will they be fortunate enough to fall together? Or will the separation be forced upon them by the great Separator, and will the survivor have to face the homeless home alone? Will the daughter redouble her efforts, with a sort of desperate hope that she and her machine together may, with longer and longer hours, do work enough to supply the wants of two? And, if so, will the forlorn hope come to such an end as that which, as I read a few days ago in a daily paper, befell another of her sex under like conditions? I was not searching for such a thing—they don't need searching for. But my eyes fell upon a paragraph from which I extract the following:

'Stitch, Stitch, Stitch!'

'Hood's lines of the seamstress are vividly recalled by a painful story of privation which was related on Saturday to the —— Coroner

at an inquest on a widow named ——, seventy six years of age.

'Mrs. ——, who earned half-a-crown a week by tailoring, was heard working her sewing-machine till after three o'clock on Thursday morning. On Friday night she was found dead, and the evidence indicated that, after working all night, she was seized with cerebral apoplexy and died. There was no money in her room.

'The coroner said he thought municipalities ought to provide almshouses for the respectable poor who refused, like Mrs. ——, to go into the workhouse.'

Let us ask ourselves this question. Considering what, I fear, are the only other alternatives, would not the kindest fate of all that seems to be open to this mother and daughter, be that they should both fall together, and so escape the doom of separation, and the abhorred shame and publicity of the last refuge of the homeless poor? What method of extinction the pitying hand of the great Releaser might devise for the mother, I do not know. But I doubt whether he could find anything more fitting with which to close the heroic efforts of the daughter, than to release her from her hopeless endeavour

as he released this other woman, and let her die by the side of her machine. And there would be another coroner's inquest, other paragraphs in the papers, other perfectly sincere appeals to the readers for something to be done to remedy such things. And what follows? What is *done?*

What is it—if we really think about it—what is it that strikes us with most wonder in all this? Is it the fact of the existence of such things and of the countless and silent sufferings that lie behind them all? Or is it that all this suffering is known and acknowledged, published and commented on day by day in the newspapers, read with genuine sympathy and shame by multitudes of kind-hearted people, and yet the shame and the suffering go on, and the day when both the one and the other will cease seems to get no nearer?

As I dwell upon the condition, the words, the looks of these two women as I saw them over their work; and as I dwell upon the only alternative fates that, so far as I can see, await them, this is the feeling that comes over me. I feel that if all the members of my own class could but see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears what I saw and heard in the case of this mother and daughter, the whole thing would be as good as ended. The shame that

lies upon us, the misery that lies upon them, would both together be swept away by the combined action of two forces which, when they work in combination, are resistless—the sense of pity and the sense of outraged human justice. But *how* can they see and hear these two women as I saw and heard them? Many of them read of such things, and some of them see and hear them. The men and women, the boys and girls of the upper classes in England, how is it that all this is, in so far as effective action of theirs goes, almost as nothing to them? How could it be brought about that it should be everything to them?

I will pass on with my companion, to whom at any rate all this is really and actually everything, to another house.

In this house also there were a mother and daughter who were both engaged in a home industry. They were making mats from a coarse kind of fibre. The mother was working in one room, and the daughter, who was only seventeen, in another. The work was shamefully unsuitable for women. The coarse fibre was picked and laid out row upon row, as the work proceeded. And as each row was laid, it had to be clamped down upon the other by means of a heavy iron bar, which was brought down over

and over again very heavily, in order to compress the whole thing into a compact mass. Even this brief description will, I am sure, show to all who read it the cruel unsuitability of the work for those who were engaged in it. What, then, would be the feelings of any persons, and especially any women, if they witnessed it with their own eyes?

And the circumstances of the two cases aggravated it all greatly. The mother's husband had died of consumption about a year before, and very soon afterwards her eldest daughter died from the same cause. The mother looked healthy, with a ruddy complexion; but I don't know how much the ruddiness might have been due to the violence of the exercise she was taking. She said she suffered a good deal from her chest; and when we consider the conditions under which she must have been doing this work, and that at the same time she had been nursing her husband and daughter, it was impossible not to feel anxious about her.

The daughter did not, I thought, look so strong as her mother. She was working as I have described, kneeling upon the ground; and as she looked up from her work and the crank and the bar, the whole thing was unforgettably pathetic. She was only seventeen, she

had a slight and graceful figure, a bright colour, and a pretty face. She looked up for a moment in quite a cheery though rather a wistful way, and as she looked I thought I had rarely seen a more pitiful and a more shameful spectacle.

In the room where she was working there stood close to the fire a little child whom they were taking care of for a neighbour.

My friend told me she had often been informed by the relatives of this woman that she was a sort of mother among them all, and that they constantly came to her for advice and help in all sorts of ways. She seemed to like talking over her prospects with my friend and hers; and in the intervals of the horrid clamping operations, as she was picking the fibre, she talked away, and always quite cheerily. The work was what it was, but it was the work they had to do, it was their calling; and if they could only manage to make a living by it, it was all right. That was her attitude towards it, as she clamped and clamped and was silent; and picked and picked, and talked to her friend frankly, familiarly, easily, cheerfully. She struck me as being an unusually sensible, active, purposeful woman, just the sort of person to make her way and succeed—if success were possible at all—in anything that she put her hand to. And

she had put her hand to this. But was success possible in this?

What, again, is the destiny that awaits these two? Considering the nature of the mother's work, and the strain that it entails, and what she said about her chest, when taken into consideration with the illness of which her husband and daughter died, is the whole thing likely to prove too much for her? Will even her activity and purposefulness and cheeriness hold out much longer?

And what of the girl? She too, of course, has been looking after her father and her sister; she too is working at the same work, with all that this implies. How long will she hold out under the strain? Her youth, her slightness, the fact that she is still growing and that her whole frame is not yet knit—all this would seem to be against her. I cannot bring myself to analyse their fate step by step, if either the one or the other of them struggles on and on, and finally falls as the father and daughter fell. But supposing their strength holds out more or less, and they go on toiling indefinitely at this work, what is to be the end of it?

I declare that, as I think over it all, and consider that those of us who are mainly responsible for such things, and who know of

their existence, keep going on and on without remedying them, I feel sometimes as if it was impossible that it should be true here in England to-day. And yet here in England and to-day it is true. Things such as these are going on in thousands and thousands of cases, not only in London, but in every great crowded centre all over the land, here in England to-day. And yet also the whole people have never been so tender-hearted, so sensitive to the sufferings and the sorrows of their fellow creatures, as they are to-day. Nor, it may be added, have they ever been so well informed about these sufferings and these sorrows. And yet the most suffering portion of their fellow creatures, the very poor, go on suffering, and their sufferings are unrelieved. And can anyone tell when the relief will come?

What is it that will stir the hearts of the upper classes deeply enough to make them fling aside, with overwhelming indignation and shame, all the flimsy obstacles, doubts and difficulties, hesitations and fears; and all the shameful obstacles, parties, and sects, and classes, and I know not what; and carry the whole thing, as we know it could be carried, by storm—almost the fiercest and most resistless storm that is known to us—the storm of Justice and Compassion?

## CHAPTER X

### CONTRASTS

I SOMETIMES think that many members of the upper classes might be moved to the point of fervour at which resolute and irresistible action becomes a necessity, by the demonstration of the glaring *unfairness* of the contrast between the condition of these poor people and their own condition. Is it possible that I may help some of my readers to the attainment of this fervour, by setting before them a contrast of this very kind, which was witnessed by me just at the time when I had been paying the two visits already described?

I was at the time staying as a guest in an hotel in the West End. What I had seen and heard in those houses of the east, and what I saw and heard in this house of the west, presented, when taken together, a contrast that was indescribably shocking.

I am not now concerned to discuss the ethical question as to whether the people who

were staying in this hotel were, apart from any other considerations, indulging in a censurable extravagance or luxury, or anything of the kind ; the discussion would be impertinent, in both senses of the word. I am concerned only with the contrast—the superfluity here and the penury there. And this contrast as it presented itself to me was, as I have said, indescribably shocking. It was shocking to the physical sense upon which it struck, and it was shocking to the moral sense of justice. My feeling about it was quite impersonal ; and it never entered into my head to be so stupid as to attach any special blame to the people who were eating and drinking, and talking and smoking, and doing all that is generally done by well-to-do people to pass the time as pleasantly as possible under the circumstances. But the fact remains, that the contrast, both general and particular, between what I had seen and heard in the sombre light of a dull November day in the east, and what I saw and heard in the brilliant effulgence, night by night, in the west, was shocking.

A small private dinner-party of twelve persons, six men and six women, took place one evening in the hotel. Six ladies walked through the hall, close to where I was standing, from one

room to the other. They walked in three couples, in close order, almost as though they might have been on parade. They were beautifully, even exquisitely, dressed. They were straight and supple and graceful, and they walked through the hall with a kind of careless precision and easy dignity, and with a look and air of refinement and grace about them that was very attractive. I hadn't, of course, the slightest idea who or what they were, and on another occasion I might not even have noticed them, or, if I had, I should have been unlikely to moralise upon them. But the occasion was peculiar, and the moralising was inevitable. For these women, I thought, everything seems to have been done from the very beginning of their lives down to the present moment to give them, so far at least as externals go, the best chance of making the most of their natural faculties. I only record the impression produced upon me in a moment, and it may not, of course, be true to the fact. If my eyes and my mind had not been full of things so different, the thing itself, along with its impression, might have escaped my notice.

Along with the shock of the contrast there forced itself upon me the following thought. It is hard to believe that, if these six ladies had

seen with their eyes and felt, as they would have felt, in their hearts the lot and the lives of these women and children in the east, and had then contrasted it all with their own lot and their own lives, they would ever afterwards have been the same. The realisation of the contrast and of what it meant would have left them other than it found them.

Yes; but this person or that, and this or that group of persons, may see and feel all this, and may henceforth be other than they were before they saw and felt it; and still nothing really practical, nothing much more than sporadic action here and there, nothing that means the removal of the shame and the suffering, may be the result of it all. For such isolated persons or groups of persons exist all over England to-day, and yet the blot and the shame remain. *How shall we come to feel it as a nation?* Or, to confine it to the bounds within which it is only fair to confine it, how shall the well-to-do members of the nation, of whom these six ladies are a sample, come to feel it with that fervour that compels to immediate and resistless action? For without this fervour the whole combined force of faint feeling seems to slip away into ineffectual nothingness. But with it, the nightmare of this horror of preventible misery would

vanish, and England, relieved of the oppression of this burden of shame, would start upon a new and happier era in her existence.

I am prepared to hear some of the weary, old, stale stuff which, to do those justice who utter it, does not come from their hearts, but only from their teeth outwards, about this being rhetoric, and emotional, and sentimental, and all that, but not practical. Such criticism is familiar enough, but it is not so familiar as it is false. Do you believe that the condition of things among these people is shameful and ought to be put an end to? If so, do you believe that it *can* be put an end to, unless those who are mainly responsible for it are led to feel the thing much more deeply and fervently than they have yet felt it? And if so, how are we going to get the necessary heat? That is the question which I am asking and trying to answer.

Without this fervour, whatsoever may be the source of it, nothing effectual, nothing fundamental, nothing final can be done. Without it, the shame, the uneasy restlessness, the conscious or half-conscious indignation with which so many English people are filled to-day at the presence of what is so full of shame and injustice—all this, and more than all this, will not simply remain as it is; it will go on increasing more and

more. If it did not, it would mean that, as a nation, we were ceasing to be sensitive to wrong, to be sensitive to our own conscience. And the sooner such a nation ceases to exist the better. But with it, the shame and the blot would be as good as wiped away; and thereupon, I repeat it, a new era of freedom, health, enterprise, and happiness would arise among us.

It is by the greatest among them that a community is saved, for it is the greatest that inspire the rest. It is to the greatest among the upper classes that the clear sight and recognition of the intolerable unfairness of the contrast between their lot and the lot of these poor people will most effectually appeal. And the greatest are those who feel the most deeply, and who act in obedience to their feeling.

Let me give another instance of this contrast, differing widely in many respects from the last, but calculated, I hope, to produce the same impression upon others as it produced upon me — the sense of the quite indefensible unfairness of the different lot that is dealt out to the different members of the one great family of the people of England.

I was staying in lodgings, and in the same house were staying a woman of about sixty and a girl of about twenty-five. Both of them were

ailing. The girl, we were told, was suffering from one of those nervous disorders that afflict so many well-to-do people to-day. She had a trained nurse who was in constant attendance upon her indoors and out. Everything seemed to be done for her that skill and care could suggest to bring her back to health.

The older woman had some bronchial trouble which, we were told, had been upon her for some time, and some special treatment and care for this must be deferred no longer. Such care and treatment it had not been possible for her to receive, and would not be until she relinquished her work and was placed under circumstances where she could be properly looked after. For the circumstances of this elderly woman were, and had been during all her life, very different from those of the girl who happened just now to be in the same house with her. For the moment they were under the same roof together, but with this temporary juxtaposition the similarity of their circumstances ceased. The girl belonged to one class and the old woman—for age cannot always be reckoned by years, and the sight that I had of this woman suggested the frailty of age—belonged to another. The friends of the girl lived some distance away, and, to judge from her present circumstances, all that could

be done was being done to bring her back to health and strength. She belonged to the well-to-do. She had nothing to do but to get well. With the older woman it was otherwise. Her friends lived I know not where. To judge from her present circumstances, they were doing nothing to bring her back to health and strength. She belonged to the ill-to-do, and she had something else to do but to get well. Her life —the only life worth living, the life with freedom—depended upon her hands, and these upon her health, and both were failing her now. She was cook in the house of which her younger sister was also an inmate; and during the few weeks that the same roof had sheltered them both, she had cooked for her. But now she could cook no longer. It was now her turn to be looked after and cared for. Surely at least equal care and attention should be bestowed upon her as was bestowed upon her younger sister. For nearly half a century she has worked and striven; and now, for a time at any rate, she can work and strive no longer. Surely some door will be open to her, and some friend, old or new, among the millions of the great family of her kindred people will be found to nurse her back to health; or, if this cannot be, to tend her carefully and kindly in the years

of life that remain to her? Yes; there is a door open to her, and she will avail herself of the hospitality that is offered her when she passes it.

They left the house, each for her respective destination, the same morning.

At half-past nine the hall was filled with luggage, and the young woman drove off with her belongings and her nurse to the station. She would soon be back again at her home; and there, we may be sure, she would be tenderly cared for, and everything that affection could suggest would be done for her.

An hour later another cab was at the door. With weakness in her looks and gait, the old woman got into it, accompanied by her mistress, and they drove off together. I did not notice any luggage; and I am not sure whether the house to which she was going does not itself find such requisites for its guests. Her journey was a short one, and in a few minutes she would find herself in the homeless home of the poor—she would find herself in the Workhouse.

Now, it will, I hope, be understood that in introducing these examples of a shocking contrast I have no intention whatever of suggesting that the younger woman, whose lot happened to have fallen in the pleasant places of the well-to-do, had, owing to this, received more care

and attention than was her due. There is no reason to suppose that it was so; and the contrast, of course, derives none of its point from this. The point of the contrast lies here. It is not that the young woman received too much care, but that the old woman received too little. The one is young, and when she is unwell she is cared for. The other is old, and when she is unwell she is uncared for. I am ignorant of the story of her life; but I heard that she was old, and I knew that she was ill, and that neither age nor illness counted for anything. The one was cared for because she was born among the well-to-do; the other was uncared for because she was born among the ill-to-do.

It is no good going on writing about it. There is the fact, and it stands and stares us in the face. No one will assert that these two women do not deserve equally fair and just treatment, the one as the other. If, indeed, there had to be a choice—though I refuse to recognise the dilemma—the older and the more frail should surely claim first attention. But that is not the question; it is not a matter of choice. The one was fairly treated, and the other with cruel unfairness, not because the one was more deserving than the other, but simply because she belonged to a different class.

That is the fact, that is the charge. It may be, as it commonly is, overlooked and ignored. It may be, as it commonly is, stated to be irremediable ; but there is one thing that it may not and it cannot be—it may not and it cannot be denied. After living a life of over sixty years, and after doing useful work for, it may be presumed, about fifty years, the health and the strength of a woman fail her. And at the end of it all there is no one to tend her, no home to receive her, excepting that last refuge of the homeless poor, which some of them would rather die than enter. The lot of her younger sister was what we have seen it to be.

These two women and their respective lots are merely types of thousands upon thousands of such cases living among us in England to-day. And the sole reason for their introduction here is because they are not unusual, but ordinary, common types of what is going on to-day, and what will, unless the shame and the injustice are fairly faced and remedied, go on and on indefinitely. Yes, they will go on and on, with that cruel dilatoriness which, if persisted in against the light of knowledge and of conscience, brings upon those who persist in it the rottenness which is the doom of a conscience

which is enlightened but refuses to act according to its enlightenment. And this ends, as it always must end and always ought to end, in the ultimate ruin of those who deliberately stifle conscience.

This is what we have to face in England to-day; and these two examples of this shameful contrast are given in the hope that those who are mainly responsible for them and who could remedy them, may, by hearing of them and reflecting upon them, be induced to take such action as will render such contrasts for ever impossible again.

A few words must be added regarding my choice of concrete examples of injustice and pitifulness. These examples are ordinary, average types of their kind—they have even been called *tame*—and to this very element they owe much of their value.

I have made no reference to the horrors and the hells of it all—vice and crime, and squalor and filth, and the mad riot and devilry of drink, and all that is to be seen, and not to be seen, where such things are. It you have ever seen them, you will see them still.

I see two women fighting and tearing one another to pieces, and a strangely unmoved crowd looking on.

I see an old woman groping with her fingers —they were a baby's fingers once—at midnight alone among the garbage and refuse thrust out into the silent street.

I see the blear-eyed company of men and women, and the doomed children and babies, in and around the drink dens.

Yes, I see all this; but it is not my purpose now to make you see it. But do not forget that it is *there*. What I have tried to make you see is surely enough. Is it not, indeed, more than enough? All these multitudes suffer terribly, in one way or another, and suffer innocently. Is not this more than enough to move you to swift and overwhelming action? This, at least, has been my purpose, and, until I am forced to believe that I have failed in this purpose, I shall continue to believe that I have succeeded.

These are the examples I have to give of the condition of all those multitudes who are at the bottom of the community in England to-day, and of the contrast to this, as it is to be seen in the condition of those who are at the top. Taking them in conjunction with what has been brought forward in preceding chapters, have I succeeded in bringing home to my

readers the shameful injustice involved in the condition of these people at the bottom, and specially in contrast with the condition of those at the top? I venture to assume that in the case of the large majority of them the answer to this question will be in the affirmative. In their case little or nothing remains for me to do. But even for some of these it is possible that a more complete and, therefore, a more effectual realisation of the situation may tend towards a more complete certainty of the fulfilment of my purpose. And so, in the hope that those who are already convinced of the existence of the injustice may, by yet keener realisation of it, be urged to swifter action, and that those who waver and those—if, indeed, there be such—who are still unconvinced, may waver no longer, or may be convinced, I will add something by way of elucidating some of the other points alluded to in an earlier chapter.

These points raise in many cases subjects of immense range, and my treatment of them must necessarily be brief. But, even thus treated, I am not without hope that the consideration of them may bring conviction to most, if not all, of those who may remain still unconvinced by what has been urged hitherto. For I find it difficult to believe that, if they could but be

approached in the right way, any single member of the upper classes would remain unconvinced. To this one sort of argument appeals, to that another. It is with the hope that in what is now to follow something of some kind may be urged which may be successful in appealing to all, may leave none unconvinced, that I proceed.

## CHAPTER XI

### OBSTACLES

### *Introductory*

Before entering upon the subject, let me make one thing clear. What follows has a general as well as a special interest. That is, everything which tends to help those at the top to come to the aid of those at the bottom, or to hinder them from doing so, will tend also to advance or to hinder the establishment of Justice, Kindness, Love. We are concerned just now with what seem to be the obstacles, rather than the aids, to the attainment of this great end. Some of these have already been considered in their bearing upon other subjects previously treated; and they are, of course, all selected with special reference to this particular subject. That is, they all tend to hinder those at the top from coming to the aid of those at the bottom.

Without for a moment assuming that I am giving anything approaching to a complete statement of what these obstacles are, I will

enumerate those that appear to me to stand out from the rest with a sharpness that leaves no doubt as to their right to be included. They are as follows:

The insufficient realisation by the upper classes of the injustice of the situation, its pitifulness, its curability, and, finally, their responsibility for it.

Wealth; hedonism; and the commercial system.

Party politics.

Unwillingness to face facts.

Education of the upper classes; the weak sense of national duty; and the lack of serious thinking and of imagination.

A mistaken view of human nature.

Absence of a plan of action.

Some of these subjects have been dealt with already, either independently or in connection with other subjects, and little remains to be said about them. To most of the rest only a very brief reference can now be made. But such brief reference bears no necessary proportion to their intrinsic interest and importance; it simply means that a longer reference to them here would seem out of place.

Of the injustice of the situation and its pitifulness, all that I need say I have said,

and I shall add no other word here. Similarly also with regard to the responsibility of those at the top for this condition of things. What has been already said upon this point seems to me sufficient, and for this reason. It is for me a thing that is either self-evident, or, at most, requires but a very few words to make it evident to all open-minded persons. And as I have already fully satisfied such requirements elsewhere, nothing further seems necessary now.

Though I have already said a good deal with regard to the curability of the present shameful condition of those at the bottom, I think it will be well to add something here. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of this question. If you believe that this condition is, in the nature of things, irremediable, and that, though much may undoubtedly be done to alleviate, nothing can be done to cure, then all your efforts, however devoted, will be deprived of that which alone can give you joy in the making of them, and alone can give you the best chance of making them successfully. For they will be deprived of the element of hope.

M. Nelidoff, President of the International Peace Conference assembled at the Hague, June 15, 1907, towards the close of his opening address used the following words :—' Let

us set to work bravely, then, the clear star of universal peace and justice, *which we shall never reach*, guiding us always for the good of humanity.'

It was, perhaps, hardly to be expected that the official delegate and spokesman of Russia should just then do otherwise than reproduce the atmosphere which he left behind him in his own country, and introduce a note of pessimism into his peroration. But the note was alien to the occasion, and it is to be hoped that it was felt to be so by those who heard it. For just in proportion to the confidence of the hopes men cherish of the advent one day of universal peace and justice, will their efforts be likely to be ultimately successful.

So it must be always, and so it is with regard to the matter now before us. Just in proportion to our confidence in the complete curability of this particular malady shall we be likely to be successful in our enterprise. On the question of its curability there is, happily, no room for doubt. It is doubly demonstrable. To deny its curability is to proclaim the bankruptcy of the human mind. And it is impossible but that one day the cure will come; for the situation is unjust, and cannot therefore last.

## CHAPTER XII

OBSTACLES—(*continued*)

*Wealth—Hedonism—The Commercial System*

I PASS to the consideration of a truly melancholy subject. The influence of wealth is terrible. It is terrible in its possible effects upon the characters of those who suffer from the possession of it, and of those who are struggling to possess it. It is terrible also, owing to the sufferings that it imposes upon those who, as a direct consequence of its existence, are doomed to destitution—for the inevitable corollary to-day to the riches of the rich is the poverty of the poor. The greater your knowledge of the subject and your reflection upon it, the more widely and the more deeply will you see that the poisonous influence of riches penetrates. But, just now I must confine myself to one particular manifestation of its manifold malignities—its effects upon the characters of those who suffer from its possession; and who, in consequence of what they suffer, are less likely than they would

otherwise be to come to the aid of those whose penury is the consequence of their own superfluity.

What, roughly speaking, is the composition of this class?

There is no section of society in England today in which the vast majority of its members is not composed of good, sound stuff, and which does not contain a proportion of noble specimens of the race. No special study is necessary to assure us of the truth of this fact. It is patent to anyone who has immediate acquaintance with members of several sections of society besides his own, and whose human interest extends that acquaintance indirectly, so that, in one way or another, there is hardly any section of society of which he does not know something more or less intimately. To the student of human nature the fact just noticed is full of the deepest significance. For there is not a shadow of doubt that the circumstances, surroundings, pursuits, callings of the people who compose these various sections of society have a tendency, so far as competition enters into them, to degrade human nature rather than to elevate it. And the fact that, though human nature is exposed to such degrading influences, it not only does not submit to be degraded, or to content

itself with a dull mediocrity, but is continually lifting itself up higher and higher—this single fact is a religion in itself. It is a fact also which is most pertinent when we are considering the composition and the characteristics of these two extremes—the top of society and the bottom. For it would indeed seem that, if ever the stuff of human nature, its grace, its beauty, and its bloom, were in peril from poisonous external influences, the peril is here. The perils have a strange affinity. In the one case the peril arises from the excess, in the other from the deficiency of the supply of that which is necessary for the sustenance of life and for the development of the highest qualities of human nature. But the peril to human nature from the deficiency is much less deadly than from the excess. The full realisation of this fact, and of its significance as bearing upon the subject now under consideration, is very important, and a few more words must be added to emphasise it.

Poverty, as the result of its worst effects upon human life and character, may debase, sodden, stupefy, and disintegrate those who are exposed to its influence. But it almost, and possibly quite, invariably stops short of inflicting upon those who are exposed to it the supreme blow

that can be inflicted upon a human being. This is reserved as an awful possibility for the other extreme of society; for wealth, as the result of its worst effects upon life and character, petrifies. It has, indeed, other evil tendencies. It may fasten upon the powers of the mind—upon thought and imagination—and upon the affections and the characters of those exposed to its influence. It may vulgarise, debase, enervate, and dehumanise them. But all such effects are as nothing when compared with the possible effect of that truly awful blow which falls sometimes upon those who are a prey to the last, the most deadly effects of wealth. For this strikes at the very source of all that is human in man—it strikes at the heart. And as it ossifies the heart, it dries up the sources of all that is human in a man, and ends by petrifying him. Strange to say, the two tendencies of the effects of wealth that are most likely to thwart the generous impulses of the members of the upper classes to remedy the sufferings of those at the bottom may be stated in opposite terms. They are the tendencies to soften and to harden. The fibre of the stuff of a man may be *softened*, and rendered finally powerless for any great action, by the effects of a self-indulgence that deprives him of that without which he ceases to be a

man ; for he loses his manliness. Or the heart of a man may by some slow and subtly pervasive poison be *hardened*, and thus the springs of generous sympathy and action be dried up at their source. The man has become a stone.

I must not end without expressing my conviction that, my belief in the greatness and goodness of human nature being what it is, there is no such possibility as the irrevocable petrifying of the heart of any human being. That is, I believe that there is always, up to the last, that within any human being, however hard he may seem to have become, which, under certain conceivable conditions, would be evoked and would assert itself as a benign and softening influence. But for our practical purposes here I fear it must be allowed that some such statement as the following fairly represents the truth in this matter. The full realisation of the injustice inflicted upon those at the bottom is always rendered more difficult, and may be rendered impossible, by the possession or the pursuit of money, with the attendant effects upon character. Money, in other words, may close the eyes so that they cannot see, and may harden the heart so that it cannot feel.

Hedonism—the excessive and selfish pursuit of pleasure—has some relation to the subject of

wealth, inasmuch as it is one of the not uncommon accompaniments of it. But it has also an independent existence of its own.

Its effect upon the character is wholly and unreservedly bad. It, too, softens that which should be hardened, and hardens that which should be softened. It softens the fibre of a man, and robs him of his manliness; or it hardens his heart; or it does both. It is wholly alien to what is best in us as a nation. Its very name is foreign and unfamiliar, and it is to be hoped that it will soon be obsolete. It is a vile parasite, and is sucking the life from that upon which it has fastened itself. More perhaps than any other single influence known to us it tends to produce that which has been described as 'the root sin,' and as 'akin to moral suicide' —selfishness.* And it ranks thus among the deadliest foes of socialism. For the antithesis of socialism is selfishness.

Of the commercial system and the commercial spirit I have already written almost all that is possible now. It is a vast subject. Let me sum up in a few sentences all that can now be added.

* 'The root sin is selfishness . . . when fully developed it involves moral suicide.' *The Substance of Faith,* by Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S.; p. 52. Sixth edition. Methuen & Co.

The commercial system feeds some of the very lowest, and starves some of the very highest qualities of a human being. It poisons those of the well-to-do who are exposed to its infection; it robs the poor; and it debases both. There is no section of society that it does not tend to vulgarise and degrade. But its effects upon the well-to-do are far the most deadly. For in their case it fastens more directly and poisonously upon the fibre of the character and disintegrates it. Its whole tendency is to make them hard, to dehumanise them. Honesty and honour are not much in its way. With honesty it has only a bowing acquaintance; they have never shaken hands. Honour it has never met, and does not know by name. That there are all over England to-day honest and honourable 'business men' is a striking testimony to the greatness of human nature. And the fact that, while men are so much exposed to the effects of the poison, some yet remain so little affected by it, and some affected not at all, is to be explained only by the fact of the unconquerable goodness of the same human nature. Yes; but still the finer touches and the sweeter influences of life and character are almost invariably marred and smirched by the thing; and—for this is our point now—the men who

are thus robbed of the best part of them are, for that very reason, far less likely to be moved to that point of pity and indignation which might otherwise *force* them to come to the aid of their destitute fellow-countrymen.

'We are made for co-operation,' said the Roman Emperor Stoic. 'We are made for competition,' says the modern economist. Which is right?

In the life of a modern nation, with its countless needs and aspirations, substitute co-operation for competition, and, for the commercial spirit, the spirit of brotherhood; and what of the nation's life? What, with such a substitution, would England be, and what would you and I be in it? Is it really impossible, as we are often told it is, to make this substitution? Does this too pass the wit of man? I don't believe it.

## CHAPTER XIII

OBSTACLES—(*continued*)

### *Party Politics*

Of the evil effects of the system of party politics something has already been said; but the subject is too important to be dismissed with an incidental reference to it.

Its effects as an obstacle to the fulfilment of our present purpose—the remedying of the pitiful condition of those at the bottom—are cruelly pertinent. For those who suffer most from its evil influences are precisely those who are in a position to do most to remedy the condition of these people. For they are the members of the House of Commons.

For the present system of party politics, substitute a system that would mean that all the members of the House of Commons were united in the sole purpose of doing what they could for their own country and for humanity; and how long do you think it would be before there would be no such contrasts as exist to-day in the

slums of the east of London and the squares of the west?

To take one instance only. Would the House of Commons rest—I will not say satisfied, for this would be a gross libel upon it—but merely dissatisfied with the setting aside of a few millions as a nucleus to deal adequately *some day* with the subject of Old Age Pensions? I am sure that their fellow-countrymen would give but one reply to this question.

I really do feel that under the present system of party politics the poor of this country—not merely those at the bottom—have a very bad chance, are very unfairly treated. The truth is, the more I know about the condition of the poor, and the more I reflect upon it, and the more I know about the system of party politics, and the more I reflect upon it, the more convinced I am that one of the main reasons why these poor people have such a bad chance is the existence of the present system of party politics. This conviction has been steadily deepening for some time, and is always confirmed by increased knowledge and thought. Moreover, the more I turn the thing over in my mind, the more hopeful do I become that it may be possible to offer some constructive suggestions that may perhaps meet with the sympathetic

attention of a not inconsiderable number of members of Parliament.

I think the following would be generally regarded as a temperate statement of the situation. The system of party politics renders the House of Commons a less efficient body for dealing with such a subject as this, than it would be under some other conceivable system.

I venture now to make the following suggestions. All subjects that come under the head of social subjects should be dealt with outside the system of party politics. They should, in all their preliminary stages, be dealt with by a committee representative of all parties in the House. The attitude of the House itself towards them should be that which is adopted towards non-contentious subjects; and the investigations of the committee should be conducted solely with the view of finding the best solution of the various problems presented to them, without any reference to a division in the House. With the aim of forwarding such an attitude, supposing it came to be a matter of voting, the House should be left to decide the question itself, irrespective of parties. That is, it should not be made a Government question.

The reason for this is plain. It is certain that, with regard to the solution of this or that

social problem, there would be differences of opinion both among the members of the committee appointed to consider it, and among the members of the House of Commons when it came before them. But it is equally certain that, if members were allowed to follow their own convictions, free from considerations of party, the line of cleavage would not be the party line. It is a monstrous supposition that, because a man is a member of this party or of that, he is, therefore, as a *man*, of necessity less or more likely to adopt this or that attitude towards any social question. Out of many such problems let me select one, and take it as a concrete example of the treatment that I have been suggesting.

The subject of Old Age Pensions has been brought before the people and before Parliament for many years. Ministers and ex-ministers, and members, taken indifferently from all parties, have expressed themselves in favour of the idea. But up to the present time no scheme has been adopted for providing any old man or woman with a pension. The present Chancellor of the Exchequer has this year (1907) gone further than any of his predecessors in the matter. He has set aside a few million pounds as a nucleus, with the intention that a scheme for providing an adequate fund for Old Age Pensions may *some*

*day* be set on foot. Could there be a sadder comment upon the self-imposed powerlessness of Parliament to deal with such a question? And never has such a comment been more pointed than it is to-day.

The present House of Commons is generally regarded as containing a far larger portion of members pledged generally to social reform than any of its predecessors. It contains also a far larger number of professed or unprofessed Socialists. Now I believe that the case for the establishment of Old Age Pensions is regarded throughout the country and by Parliament as the most urgent of all such problems as are capable of a purely pecuniary solution. It is entirely a question of finance, a question to be dealt with by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

No one who read Mr. Asquith's Budget Speech of 1907 can fail to have been moved by his opening sentences when he came to deal with the subject of Old Age Pensions. He had been previously dealing with those members of society who, instead of coming more or less near to the end of the journey of life, are only beginning it; and he had stated that the sum already spent annually upon elementary education amounted to over twenty-five millions.

His last words in dismissing this subject were these :—'This I do say, there is not a man sitting on either side of this House who is prepared substantially to recede from the performance of this enormous duty.' And then he proceeded, 'That is one thing. There is another thing—nearer the end of the journey of life—which makes, I believe, an equally strong, though hitherto an unavailing, appeal both to the interest and to the conscience of society. I mean the figures of the men or women who perhaps, spent out with a life of ill-requited labour, find themselves confronted in old age, without fault or demerit of their own, with the prospect of physical want and the sacrifice of self-respect.'

To doubt the sincerity of the feelings of a man who stands up in the House of Commons and uses such words as these would be to doubt everything. The sincerity of his sympathy gives all the more point to his subsequent treatment of the subject, which is, in itself, about as extreme an illustration of the present impotence of Parliament to deal with such subjects as could be instanced.

Following immediately upon those words of sympathy are some that grate horribly upon us, as shockingly inappropriate to so fine an atmosphere. 'Sir, I never gave, nor, so far as I

know, did any of my colleagues on this bench give, any pledge at the General Election on the subject of what is called Old Age Pensions. We knew something of the magnitude of the problem, and we thought it wrong to raise expectations without the knowledge that they could be met.' (Ministerial cheers, and ironical Opposition cheers.)

For a moment or two we have breathed freely a wholesome and natural air; and here we are back again in the old, used-up, stifling and poisonous stuff which too often composes the atmosphere of the House of Commons. After this the whole thing, we may be sure, is a foregone conclusion. The appeal has been made to party passions, and it is doomed to failure.

The Minister proceeds:—'Nor do I now commit myself or any of my colleagues to any specific scheme, although both the Prime Minister and myself have laid down certain conditions to which, in our judgment, any practical proposal must conform. Whatever is done in this matter, as I have said before in this House, must be done by steps and stages, and cannot be achieved by a single blow.

'But this I do say, and I wish to say it with all the emphasis of which I am capable, speaking

for the whole of my colleagues on the Treasury Bench, that in the sphere of finance we regard this as the most serious and the most urgent of all the demands for social reform—(Ministerial cheers)—and that it is our hope—I will go further and say that it is our intention—before the close of this Parliament—yes, and before the close of the next session of this Parliament—if we are allowed to have our way—a large if—to lay firm the foundation of this reform. (Loud Ministerial cheers.)

'To that general statement there is one thing I wish to add, although, perhaps, the addition is hardly necessary. We are a Free Trade Government. (Ministerial cheers.) This is a Free Trade House of Commons. Whatever new resources we can provide for the purposes I have indicated are subject to that governing condition. In a sense, of course, that involves a limitation of the area. (Opposition cries of "Hear, hear.") I thought that would be appreciated on the other side. But it is a limitation of the area only in the sense in which a wise builder, who is seeking to lay the foundations of an enduring structure, recognises the limits which divide sound ground from an unfathomable morass. (Laughter and Ministerial cheers.) We do not dogmatise about Free Trade. We are neither professors

nor missionaries. There is nothing we need say to countries which adopt other systems than our own. But for us here, forty-three millions of people in these two small islands—dependent as we are upon extraneous sources of supply for the bulk both of the food of our people and the materials of our industry, the one, free, open and untrammelled market in the whole world—for us, I say, Free Trade is the breath of life—(loud Ministerial cheers)—and there is no social reform that would not be dearly purchased by its sacrifice.' (Renewed Ministerial cheers.)

The fat is in the fire with a vengeance, and with the usual consequences. In a few sentences the Minister has done the mischief. That which by his opening words of human sympathy Mr. Asquith had lifted for a moment into the sweet air of what is human and real, the Minister has, by his immediately succeeding appeal to the prejudices and passions of party, degraded to bitterness and doomed to failure. After making the usual sort of contrast between the members of a party that make promises at elections but do not perform, and those who make no promises but do perform, he proceeds to introduce the question which, perhaps more than all others combined, awakens the bitter-

ness of party animosity to-day. And, further, he emphasises it all by the last words I have quoted—'For us Free Trade is the breath of life, and there is no social reform which would not be dearly purchased by its sacrifice.' But the Tariff Reformers believe that social reform is possible only if there be tariff reform—and so on, and so on.

The end is the setting aside of a few millions as a nucleus to the establishment of something more, 'if we are allowed to have our way—*a large if.*' Was there ever such a gloomy end to such a fair beginning?

What a beginning, what a middle, and what an end! The beginning of Mr. Asquith's remarks on the subject of Old Age Pensions was a simple expression of human sympathy, and was, as such an expression always must be, noble. The middle, in so far as it concerned itself with the petty passions and prejudices of party politics, was small. What was noble proceeded from the *man*, for the man is human and kind. What was small proceeded from the *system*, for the system is neither. The end, so far as concerned the present relief of these men and women whose misfortunes and innocence Mr. Asquith described with such sympathy, was barren.

Noble, small, barren. And in this particular instance there is a peculiar irony in the situation. For the Prime Minister is the man who, some years ago, drew his countrymen's attention to the injustice of the whole situation in a vivid phrase that they have not forgotten. And this particular subject—the providing for the aged poor—is perhaps the most pathetic item in it. For indigent old people are, in some ways, the most pitiable group of the whole of the twelve millions who are 'on the verge of hunger.' No Prime Minister has ever shown more sympathy with the poor or more determination to introduce measures designed to help them. But here he is powerless. And the House of Commons is powerless also. Does anyone believe that, with the undoubted sympathy on the question on both sides of the House, the result would have been what it is, if the debate had been continued in the spirit of the opening sentences which I have quoted?

It would, indeed, be an example of the craziest of crazy stupidities, at any time and under any circumstances, to confuse the actions of a man with the actions of a Party Politician, and I trust that I have not been guilty of such stupidity here. But, lest there should be the remotest chance of my having left a wrong im-

pression upon anyone by what I have been writing, let me say this: *It is the system and the system only* that I have been criticising—the stifling system of party politics. Moreover, the subject of Free Trade is so momentous a subject, and the convictions of the speaker and of those for whom he spoke were so strong and deep, that it may have seemed inevitable that some reference should be made to it, when the subject of ways and means was being considered. Yes. But all this makes no difference to my whole argument; it only emphasises it. For my point is, that the effect of the whole treatment of this special subject of such really terrible interest to those immediately concerned, was to mix it up with all the bitterness of party politics, and at the same time with the deepest convictions that divide members of Parliament, *with the inevitable result.* And the inevitable result is the indefinite postponement of the subject and the indefinite prolongation of the sufferings of those people of whom Mr. Asquith, the man, spoke in words of such warm human sympathy, but whom Mr. Asquith, the Party Minister, was powerless to help. This human sympathy he shared with every member who heard him give utterance to it. And will anyone tell me that, if it had not been for the

influence of party politics, the united resolve of the members of the House of Commons—united in such a resolve—would have been unable to give some immediate help to these poor people of whose innocent sufferings they are all aware? I don't and won't believe it. No, it is the system that is at fault, and not the men.

I have, I hope, written enough to make it impossible that anyone will fail to see that it is with the system, and not with the men who are stifled by it, that I am concerned; and I return to the main subject.

I have stated my belief that the members of the House of Commons are unanimously in sympathy with the idea of Old Age Pensions. But the remark does not, of course, apply to the State provision of such pensions. Here there is great difference of opinion. But I believe that the results of a thorough inquiry into the subject by a Committee of the House of Commons would be to produce practical unanimity in favour of State aid, and for this reason. It would be made quite clear that the wages of the workmen and the workwomen are not only insufficient to provide Old Age Pensions, but are, with the very rarest exceptions, insufficient even to satisfy the requirements of a reasonably

human existence. The evidence in proof of this would be overwhelming. And the completer the evidence, the more overwhelming would be the proof.

For myself, I can think of no case that I know or have heard of where a working man, if he had a family, would be able to save enough to buy a pension for himself and his wife, and at the same time provide himself and those dependent on him with what is sufficient to satisfy a reasonable standard of human life Nay, I am compelled to go further and to say with shame that it is very rare to find that he can satisfy such requirements, apart altogether from the question of providing pensions. The amount of money that he receives is really insufficient for this.

The ignorance of such facts as these on the part of many to whom the public looks for instruction is astounding. There are hosts of examples of this ignorance occurring day by day. Let me select one that came to my notice as I was writing on this subject.

The 'Spectator,' in an article on Old Age Pensions, July 20, 1907, strongly opposes the idea of paying for them out of State funds. From this article I select the following sentence: 'There is practically not a man or woman in

the kingdom who could not by a very moderate payment, made between the years of sixteen and twenty-four, provide an old age pension of five shillings a week at sixty-five.'

How such a statement managed to get published in the 'Spectator' would be inexplicable, had we not been taught by experience to expect similar ignorance where otherwise it might have seemed impossible to find it. All the information I have received, both directly and indirectly, proves without the shadow of a doubt that such a statement has no foundation in fact, is indeed quite contrary to the facts. I have selected this particular statement because it is the latest to hand. It is up to date, and that is all. It is absolutely at variance with the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, already quoted—'I mean the figures of the men or women who perhaps, spent out with *a life of ill-requited labour*, find themselves confronted in old age, *without fault or demerit of their own*, with the prospect of physical want and the sacrifice of self-respect.' One single such statement, coming from such an authority, ought to have been sufficient to render impossible the publication of such a sentence as that quoted from the 'Spectator,' with its consequent misleading tendency.

The House of Commons might do much to render it impossible that the Public should ever be so misled. Its members could at least be in the way of receiving trustworthy information on such subjects, which information should be made public property. And this would be but one of the many benefits conferred upon the community, if the House of Commons adopted some such simple method as I venture now to suggest.

I suggest that all subjects of Social Reform be treated non-contentiously, and referred to a Select Committee composed indifferently of members from all parties.

Witness after witness would tell the same tale. The life's course of an average working man is, with such few exceptions that they are quite negligible, somewhat as follows. Subject to the chances and vicissitudes of life and of his special calling, the time comes when he can work no longer. It may come suddenly. An accident or a sudden breakdown in health may bring his working days to an end in a moment. But far more frequently it is a gradual, and usually a very melancholy, and often a very protracted, process. Long before anything like old age—if the expression is used in its natural sense—is in sight, his old age has settled upon him.

Apart altogether from accidents, a breakdown in health, a weakening of constitutional strength, something or other, often quite obscure, excludes him from the number of the able-bodied; and the period of old age, with all its familiar and dismal outlook, is upon him. It is a period of tramping about for chance jobs, with continually diminishing pay when he gets them. And the longer he lives the greater are the difficulties. Doles from the parish, doles from friends, assistance from relatives keep him going for a longer or shorter time, according to his vitality. Or such means may not be at hand; and he passes to the Workhouse for a period of indefinite duration, in proportion also to his vitality. But whatever his years, or wherever he dies, he dies an old man. And the country in which he has worked—and worked, we must suppose, with the same ability and industry as does an average man in any other class—has neglected him with a neglect to which we have no right to apply milder words than shameful and cruel.

All this, with all sorts of details, a Committee of the House of Commons would hear from every witness that they examined, from whatever part of the country he came, and whatever might be the nature of the district—from the congested

millions of the great cities to the scattered villages and sparse cottages of the country. It would always be the same tale. And does anyone believe that if, as we are now supposing, the whole thing were kept free from Party, and the Committee and the House of Commons were free to act according to the natural dictates of their human sympathies, they would allow a single session to go by without rendering such a tale impossible again? I don't believe it. For I don't believe, and I can't, that these men, having heard what they would have heard, would, if they were all acting freely and naturally, be able to rest for a single year without discovering and applying the remedy.

What puzzles me is this. The pitiful and *innocent* sufferings of these old people are described in very sympathetic language by Mr. Asquith, and undoubtedly his feelings were shared by those who listened to him. How is it that they are willing to allow these old people to go on suffering for a single year longer? Remember, they are concerned with a strange state of things—old people, having received less than they deserved during their lives, brought to destitution in their old age, and, with very rare exceptions, offered only that form of relief which some of them would die rather than accept, and

almost all accept very unwillingly—the 'House. Remember also that the House of Commons has now pledged itself to the *principle* of providing at some period Old Age Pensions out of State funds; so that what had undoubtedly been a really serious, fundamental difficulty—the question of principle—no longer exists. It is now simply a question of finding the money this year, or next year, or sometime. Yes, but how about these poor people *meanwhile*?

I once heard Mr. Gladstone say that there were occasions on which the ties of Party should 'shiver and snap.' Is not this such an occasion? Can I not appeal to the members of the House of Commons that next year at least[1] they will grant the money—the principle they have already granted—to relieve such a pitiful situation? How can I persuade you? Here is an example of its pitifulness.

A woman has for many years worked to support her father and mother, both of them old and unable to support themselves. She kept the home together, and her father died in it. As he died, the mother met with a small accident, nothing for a young person, too much for her, and she went to bed and continued there. For some time the daughter kept things going,

[1] 1908.

but finally her health gave way seriously, and —the usual consequence—she and her mother had to go to the Workhouse. For months she lay ill there, but got up and came back to her work, but not to her home; for this had, of course, to be given up when she left it. And now she lives on with enfeebled health and uncertain earnings, barely sufficient to support herself, and quite insufficient to support her mother also, who is thus, at over eighty, condemned, so far as can be seen, to spend the rest of her days in the Workhouse.

What are the feelings of these two? For nearly sixty years they have had their home, with all that this means to them. And now? 'We had to sell up our home.' 'I couldn't have her out, because I couldn't keep her.'

I do think that such an example—and it is of course only a type of thousands and thousands such—might be expected so to move the members of the House of Commons as to make Party ties 'shiver and snap.' For again I must remind them that there is no principle at stake, only money. They would commit themselves to nothing excepting the immediate relief of about as pitiable, pathetic, and unjust a situation as is well conceivable, the pitiableness, pathos, and injustice of which they have

already had described to them by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

You are a member of the House of Commons. You may be a rich man, with heaps to spare, or a poor man, with nothing. You may belong to this party or to that. All this makes no difference. You are a man, and that is enough. What would you feel if you and your mother were in such a case? For this is, after all, the question we must ask ourselves. Do you know, or have you ever known, what it is to have a mother whom to aid and comfort is one of the joys of your life, or to have aided and comforted is one of its sweetest memories? Supposing you were able no longer to aid her, and she had to be taken to the Workhouse and die there? Don't tell me that the cases are not parallel. If you do, this only means that you don't know. There are insensitive people in all sections of society. But there are also in all sections of society old persons to whom it would be a misery to go to the Workhouse, and to whose sons and daughters it would be a misery that they should be there.

Have you ever been into any of these Houses of the Poor—'Poorhouses,' as they call them in the North? Have you noticed the old people in them, and have you talked to them and got to

know something about them, whether they are still standing or sitting about, or no longer able to sit or stand, and have taken to their beds?

Year by year these places are managed with more care, more kindness, more sympathy, though much still remains to be done to improve them, as those know best who know them best. But whatever the management may be, and whatever may be the skill and the kindness of those who manage, it is the same with this as it is with so much else in England to-day. It is the *system* that is to blame. And the system is cruel, *and we know that it is; and many of these old people know it too.* 'It isn't like being with your own.' That is it. *It isn't like being with your own.*

An old woman nearly ninety has been lying in a workhouse bed year after year. Her native place is miles away, but she is full of it yet and of those who lived in it and still live in it for her, and when she tells you that she never sees anyone now that knows her, her eyes for a moment or two have tears in them.

Well, it is all in my mind just now as I write, and her old face is before me, and so are other old faces. And I believe if they were before you, you would feel as I do about it all. You would feel as I do, that it is cruel. And if, as

you walked away from it all, you met one motor car after another filled with the people that fill them, what would you think of the contrast?

Once more, it is the *system* that is the curse to us. And you, the members of the House of Commons, can do more to alter the system than all the rest of us put together. Those who work this system may be the kindest and the best of people, but the system is an impossible one, impossible owing to its cruelty.

The only way in which I can appeal to you now is to your sense of justice and pity. How *can* we leave these old people lying there, away from all that home means to them, with nothing before them but the gray years of an empty homelessness, till there is an end of it all? If all this was inevitable—well then there it is, and they and we must make the best of it. But it is not. In most cases it is actually only a question of a certain number of shillings a week, for each of them, and they would be at home again. It is actually a question of these shillings. And a few hundred yards away the motor cars are bowling along, and their occupants—what are they doing and what are they thinking about? And what are we all doing and thinking about?

There is indeed much that money can't touch, to say nothing of what it can't cure. But here in many cases it could, in so far as cure is possible, actually cure, and without it there is no cure. And the nation's income leaps up and up, and these old people want, each of them, a certain number of shillings a week, and the nation can't afford it just now—these old people must wait awhile. Was there ever such a situation?

Well, there is a limit to bringing such things before you now, and I have reached it.

But how can I persuade you? For it is to this that I keep coming back. How can I persuade you?

Some of you need no persuading. You would do the deed of justice and mercy, and if this could be done only by finding the money for it, you would find it. Why are not all of you of this mind? You are pitiful, and love justice. Is it because you don't know these people, do not live among them and see them with your own eyes day by day, and cannot somehow do all this with the eyes of your imagination? It may be so. But some of your members do live among them, do know them. You may perhaps think that I have no claim to appeal to you for these people, but

their claim to do so you will not question. Won't you at least listen to them? One of them was appealing to you lately, and this was his appeal:—'Are the unemployed, and the aged poor and the starving children to go on in their misery . . . ?' Are they to go on in their misery—*till when?*

If I am mistaken in attributing this cruel dilatoriness to the influence of party politics, to what influence do you attribute it? The principle is granted, the money certainly, in overwhelming quantities, is available. And yet these poor people, and those who love them, suffer and wait. *How long?*

Do you think that any of the well-to-do people who have money to spare would object to your levying upon them the tax necessary to keep these old people in their homes? I don't believe it, if only they could realise what it means to them to be deprived of their homes. But could not you, the Members of the House of Commons, come, by some means or other, to realise this, and then tell your constituents and the country what you feel about it all? Could you not do this before next spring,[1] so as to be able to vote the necessary funds when the time has arrived for this?

[1] 1908.

There has never been a more favourable moment for action. For years the country's revenue has been steadily and swiftly increasing. The present House of Commons is pledged deeply to social reforms, and this particular subject of Old Age Pensions is, we have heard on the highest authority, regarded as 'in the sphere of finance . . . the most serious and the most urgent' of them all. And yet the actual relief is still postponed. Once more, does anyone believe that this cruel postponement would continue for a single moment, if the whole question of social reform was put outside the scope of party, and was dealt with according to the free and natural impulses of the individual and collective sympathies of the House of Commons?

Take the three of its members who would have most to say in the settlement of such a question.

Of the genial nature of the present Prime Minister there is but one opinion. His official attitude in favour of social reform generally is notorious.

There is similar testimony to the friendliness and kindliness of Mr. Balfour.

No other testimony to Mr. Asquith's human sympathy is needed than the opening words

which he used on the subject of Old Age Pensions.

What might not these three men do to-day for the relief of the present necessities of the poor, and for the establishment of something that would lead to the righting, in so far as they ever can be righted, of human wrongs?

Towards the end of his Premiership, Mr. Balfour received a deputation of unemployed women; and during the discussion he was invited to spend a week or so in an East End district, and was assured that he would have a hearty welcome and be made very comfortable there. *What would have happened if Mr. Balfour had accepted the invitation?* What might happen if Mr. Balfour accepted the invitation *now*, and was permitted to take with him also his friend Mr. Asquith? I believe much would happen—more, perhaps, than any of us can foresee.

One result, at any rate—itself of boundless interest and reach—would surely follow. What these two men would see and hear during a week's residence in the East End, and under such guidance as they would be under, would surely bring about one result. They would resolve that, in so far as their influence could bring it about, what are called 'social questions' should be taken altogether out of the

category of party questions. And there can, I think, be no doubt that they would be supported in this resolution by the present Prime Minister, and that, on the advice and recommendation of these three men, the House of Commons would adopt this resolution. Indeed, I believe that the members of the House of Commons, of all parties and all shades of opinion, would be practically unanimous on the subject, and are only too willing to adopt something of the kind.

Is it too much to expect Mr. Balfour, now that he is out of office, to accept an invitation which perhaps he felt that he could, for various reasons, hardly accept as Prime Minister?

Some time ago I attended a meeting of Guardians of the poor in an East End district. After the meeting was over, I walked about with one of the Guardians among the crowd of poor people who were waiting outside the room in which the meeting had been held. My companion moved among them and listened to what they had to say, or what might be said for them. One case was brought to his notice, and the remark that was made to him about it was that it was 'a heartbreaking case.' He turned to me and said, '*Every* case is a heartbreaking case.' And this is the conclusion that Mr. Balfour and Mr. Asquith would come to if they were

to spend a week in an East End district, and were to see and hear things for themselves. And, being what they are, it is impossible to believe that the seeing and the hearing would leave them as it found them, and that some such result as that which I have mentioned would not follow in the case of the House of Commons, with what possible results to the country I will not stop to conjecture.

'Come into the House of Commons, the grave of all great enthusiasms,' once said to me one of its members. The emphasis is on the adjective. It is the *quality* of the enthusiasm that is in question. There is perhaps no assembly where there is a richer supply of small enthusiasms. But I fear that, with rare exceptions, the House of Commons is only too often the grave of great enthusiasms. An investigation into the causes of this would be immensely interesting, but it is not permissible now. Undoubtedly, one of the chief causes is that the House of Commons is sectional. It is largely due to the party system. Remove this cause, and there will be great enthusiasms. That is, with reference to my present purpose, put social subjects outside party politics, and there will be a great enthusiasm over them, with

the almost invariable consequence of great enthusiasm—great action.

I have made my suggestions in the hope that one of the results of keeping all social questions clear of sectional and party interests might be the infusion of a great enthusiasm on these subjects. But if for some members of Parliament there should still be lacking the motive power of a great enthusiasm, there still remains one means which I cannot bring myself to believe would, if these subjects were excluded from party, fail to kindle it. *Let them go and see and hear the things for themselves.* I find it impossible to believe that such a seeing and hearing would leave them as it found them. Whatever it found them, it would leave them—being the men they are — determined that such things should cease to be.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OBSTACLES—(*continued*)

### *Unwillingness to face facts*

THE pitiable condition of those at the bottom is due in no small measure to the existence of a characteristic quality of the English people. As a nation we are peculiarly unwilling to look facts in the face.

It is a strange, but an undoubted, fact that our place among the nations to-day is due, in some measure, to this national peculiarity. In her strength and in her weakness, in her contradictions, surprises and inconsistencies, England is unique in the annals of history. For many years she has aroused both in friends and foes strangely mixed feelings. Admiration, envy, fear, contempt, love, hate have at one time or another — and sometimes, strangely enough, simultaneously—been the feelings with which other nations have regarded England. But common to them all, and hardly ever absent, has been the feeling of *wonder*. We have, it

would seem, gained our amazing position, and still hold it, largely in spite of ourselves. And this result is due in no small degree to the fact that we are, as a nation, devoid of many of those characteristics the possession of which lead, and are seen to lead, to final success. We are quite singularly deficient in the capacity for foresight. We have developed the doctrine of *laissez aller* into something like a fine art; nay, we have almost made it a religion. It is a dangerous habit of mind, and we have not escaped the danger. We have adopted the doctrine in the way in which we adopt most doctrines—by the method of instinct rather than of reason. And when we mention the word instinct we come near to the root of the whole matter. Our policy is the wonder not only of the world but of ourselves; and it is so, largely because by its very nature it is no policy at all, inasmuch as it is mainly an instinct, and therefore mainly incalculable. The instinct itself is a high instinct, but one that may only too readily be degraded. The instinct is for liberty. And it is to-day, as it has always been, the one, great, dominant, elementary passion of the English people. In conjunction with a strange doggedness in their purpose and their courage, it has, at its best, led them to deeds of

high and triumphant heroism that remain for them as an imperishable heritage and inspiration. This is one side, and now for the other.

We have the defects as well as the merits of our qualities. We love liberty, we hate to be bound. We love liberty, both for ourselves and for others. Let us go our own way and let others go theirs. Strike off the fetters from the slave and from everybody. Let everything be free—free trade, free competition, free commerce, free colonies, free development for everyone and for everything, freedom everywhere, *laissez faire, laissez aller*. Yes, and with this as our religion —*free and unrestricted competition*—we entered more than a century ago upon that phase of the industrial and commercial system, the development of which is to be seen to-day in the slums of the East End and the squares of the West, the squalor and penury of those at the bottom, and the luxury and superfluity of those at the top. 'How art thou fallen from Heaven!' For what we witness is but the degradation of our greatest national passion. We have come really at last, though, I am sure, largely unconsciously, to juggling with the great word liberty. But this juggling is, I believe, coming to an end. Gradually, and perhaps mainly instinctively, we are coming to realise that freedom to rise means

also freedom to fall; and that, in the cruel competition of modern commerce, freedom to rise has come to mean for many predestined necessity to fall. The first practical result of the realisation of this was the Factory Acts. And from that day to this all sorts of checks have been, and continue to be, devised against the evil operations of this debased use of the doctrine of liberty, with its too frequent corollary of 'The Devil take the hindmost!' And as one of the results of the deification of *laissez aller*, we have that unwillingness to face facts which bids fair, if we are not careful, to end in something like incapacity to face them. But the hopeful side is just this, that we are more and more throwing carelessness aside, and coming to see that though liberty is a great blessing, *laissez aller* is a great curse. But unfortunately the process may be slow. It is impossible to forecast — limiting ourselves now to our special subject—*how long* it may take the members of the upper classes to realise the pitiful and unjust sufferings of these poor people, and their responsibility for them, with strength and warmth sufficient to drive them to remedial action.

One of the serious obstacles to such realisation is their now ingrained and inherited unwillingness to look facts in the face. And let

me beg them to ponder the following truth. The greater their own ease and comfort, and the greater their own security, the more prone are those at the top to let things slide, the more difficult it is for them to look in the face this particular fact—the misery and destitution of those at the bottom. And so they linger and linger on. Yes; but the others also linger and linger on. And it is in order that those who linger on in their superfluity on the one side, and those who linger on in their destitution on the other, may thus linger on no more, that I do beseech the members of the upper classes to look at least this particular fact in the face with no delay. For if they will but once make up their minds, both as individuals and as a class, to do so, I have little doubt as to the result. The situation, when once realised, is as much a mockery of the great word 'liberty' as was the institution of slavery. And it is only because we have not looked this form of slavery in the face that it was not years ago swept away as was the other. It is a more difficult, because a more complicated, task; but the cruelty of the thing is in some respects greater than that of the other. And as soon as this is fully realised, it also will be only a miserable memory.

## CHAPTER XV

OBSTACLES—(*continued*)

*Education of the Upper Classes—Weak Sense of National Duty.—Lack of Serious Thinking and of Imagination.*

A WEAK sense of national duty and a lack of serious thinking are taken together because they are in some measure due to one cause—the education of the upper classes.

The obligation of coming to the aid of the very poor is the most pressing national duty that lies before the upper classes to-day, and their slowness to perceive this is only a special example of their weak sense of national duty. Similarly also with regard to their lack of serious thinking. To this lack is due—to a far greater extent, I think, than they are aware of—their insufficient realisation of the injustice and pitifulness of the sufferings of the very poor and their consequent inaction in the direction of remedying them.

The statement that the upper classes are deficient in a sense of duty generally would be quite untrue. A mere enumeration of the ordinary domestic and other duties which, in common with the rest of the community, they perform, would suffice to disprove it. But pass from the sectional to the national, from the multifarious details that compose the nation to the nation as a whole, and all is changed. All that I can do now to call attention to the relatively weak sense of national duty which the upper classes have in common with all the members of the community, is to put the thing in the form of a question and leave it to be answered. In how many departments of national life do the upper classes as a body, and apart from rare and splendid exceptions, make any real sacrifice of money, ease, leisure, or prejudice to forward the interests, not of this or that section of the community, but of the community as a whole?

The putting of such a question is enough, for there is only one reply to it. And it must not be overlooked that the neglect of national duties on the part of the upper classes is specially reprehensible. For, owing to their comparative leisure, easy circumstances, and the disproportionately large share they have of the

common stock of the national possessions, it is the more incumbent upon them to devote themselves to the national service. Receiving more from the community, they are bound to give more to it. But there is no evidence that they do this.

The lack of serious thinking is a marked characteristic of these days; and something must be said in substantiation of this statement.

The quality of thought must depend largely, in the case of the immense majority of persons, upon the deliberateness of the thinking, the absence of hurry in it, and its continuity. Now, it is precisely these conditions that, in the case of most persons, including most writers and speakers, seem absent. There is an absence of the evidence of sustained reflection, of meditation. It has been stated somewhere that it is of no importance whether a particular thing is true for to-morrow; it is sufficient if it is true for to-day. In other words, most of modern thought is ephemeral, it is 'journalistic'—in both the popular and the literal sense of that word.

I am constantly struck by a sort of unwillingness on the part of intelligent people to think a thing out, to go down to the bottom of it. It is distasteful to them to do this.

And this tendency is apt to go further still, and to degenerate into actual incapacity for deep and sustained thought. I don't think this statement is likely to meet with much contradiction; anyhow, I have no doubt of its truth. I believe that it is largely owing to the absence of close thought that well-to-do people have not realised the condition of those at the bottom and the extent of their responsibility for it, and have not elaborated any plan for remedying it.

For this state of things, as I began by saying, the education of the upper classes is in some measure responsible.

The immense majority of the sons of the members of the upper classes are educated at the public schools; and whatever else the public schools do for those who frequent them, they certainly do very little to strengthen their sense of national duty, or to assist them in the direction of serious thinking. I call attention to this now for the following reasons.

I have devoted to this subject—the subject of public school education—both in its theory and practice, the main portion of my working life. I have therefore the less hesitation in alluding to it with the brevity that is incumbent upon me here, and with the consequent dogmatism. Further, I am confident that the early

education of the members of the upper classes has much to do with the difficulty they have in putting themselves into the position of those at the bottom, and in thinking the whole subject out. And last—and very important—a good deal of what is, so far as our present purpose is concerned, most unsatisfactory in the education of the public schools could be improved. The necessary reforms could be introduced with little delay and considerable success. All that I can write now on the subject must necessarily be very meagre, and only in the nature of outlines.

First, with regard to the sense of national duty—duty to the community as a whole.

The present condition of the public schools is strangely opposed to the cultivation of this sense. In their constitution and in the whole atmosphere of them, in the subjects taught and not rarely in the teaching of them, there is one clearly marked stamp—the stamp of *exclusiveness*.[1] They are the most undemocratised national institutions in the whole country; and, except in three particulars—the games, the Rifle Corps, and the School Missions—they stand almost uniquely outside the general life of the nation;

[1] I have treated this subject more fully in a little book referred to on page 61, in a chapter on 'Exclusiveness.'

and, strangely enough, they do so far more than they did a hundred years ago.

The old public schools—the old Grammar Schools—were far less socially exclusive than are the public schools to-day. There is to-day almost nothing excepting the instances given above to remind a public school boy of the fact that he is a member of a nation. He is only reminded that he is a member of a class. He is isolated from the life of the rest of the nation in almost every direction. The result is inevitable, and is disastrous and unfair both to him and to the nation of which he is a member.

When a public school boy leaves his school, he leaves it with its mark stamped deeply into him. There is, perhaps, no such characteristic and persistent stamp as the stamp of a public school. And setting aside now—for it is irrelevant here—all that is to the good in the influence of a public school upon its members, this particular influence is very hurtful. For the boy leaves his school and enters upon his manhood with a strange ignorance of, and usually therefore a strange indifference to, the life of the whole community. In so far, indeed, as he is destined to interest himself in the social life and interests of the whole community, he will have to unlearn much that he learnt, and learn much that he did not learn,

at his public school. This is hard upon him and hard upon the nation of which he is a member. But it is true; and I do not think that its truth will be questioned by any who have a close acquaintance with public schools. And the closer the acquaintance, the more certain will be the conviction on this point. And none know it so well as do the most enlightened of that most devoted body of men, the public school masters themselves.

The public school, of course, is not the only place at which the boys of the upper classes are educated. For most of them there has been a period of school education antecedent to, and for many of them there will be a period succeeding the public school education. But under neither of these two conditions is there much to correct the exclusiveness of the public schools. Even at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, with the necessarily increased freedom and largeness there, both of studies and of social life, there is still the stamp and the influence of exclusiveness. But there is no doubt that a boy's days at his public school are immeasurably formative, and that the mark he receives there is very deep and persistent. Those who know the public schools best know this best. And one of the deepest marks set upon him there is the mark of exclusive-

ness; this is the atmosphere which he breathes there. And while he is there, he hears little and practises little that bears upon his duty to the nation; and so he leaves his school grievously weak in general social sympathy, or a sense of duty to the nation of which he is a member.

The influence of the public schools is immense. This influence is now, both in their constitution and in their practice, largely—I do not say or mean consciously—unfavourable to the encouragement of a sense of national duty, and of national, social, and democratic sympathies. But—and this is a most important point—this influence might be favourable; for the means to this end are not difficult either to discover or to apply.

No one who has had experience in teaching public school boys will regard the cultivation of thinking as an easy matter. But the better teacher a man is, the more dissatisfied will he be with the present outcome of public school teaching in this direction, and almost invariably with the subjects taught and the methods of teaching them. That is, some subjects that especially tend to assist the cultivation of thought and imagination are not taught to a boy as they deserve to be taught to him. The time devoted to them is insufficient, and the skill is not rarely

inadequate. That there are exceptions, and most brilliant exceptions, is notorious. But of the accuracy of the statement as a whole there is, I believe, no doubt. The fact is recognised not only by almost all outside critics of the public schools—many of whom can hardly find words strong enough to express their opinions about it—but by many of the most distinguished public school masters themselves. And this is encouraging. For so long as reforms are urged only from without, the conditions for the successful introduction of them are very unfavourable. But certainly this is not the case here. There has never been a period in their history when the public schools were served by more devoted men than they are to-day ; and when you add to devotion a conviction that the introduction of new things is demanded in the best interests of the objects of devotion, you have got the most favourable combination for the successful introduction of reforms. And this is the combination among many of the best public school masters to-day.

The whole country is just now suffering from a dearth of original power and great intellectual qualities in its representative men. It is so in almost every department of national life ; and to this rule the great department of education is no

exception. That is, there are not just now among the headmasters of the public schools any examples of exceptional ability or of originality such as there have sometimes been in the past; and this condition is, of course, not favourable to the successful introduction of great reforms. But, though there is no evidence that any one man will by his individual force and inspiration sweep away the usual big and little obstacles in his path, there is something else which will stand the schools in good stead, and will—so far as this can be done—make up for the lack of any great single personality. And this is, the combined force of earnestness and devotion which are conspicuously present, as a body, in both the headmasters and the assistant masters of the public schools to-day.

It is—as is the case with so many of our national institutions—the *system* that is mainly at fault, and not the men who work under it. And since I believe that the system can in this case undoubtedly be remedied, and that the men who work under it are able, and many of them anxious, to remedy it, my appeal to them is full of hope. I believe that they have it in their power to confer upon the boys and the schools to which they are so devoted an inestimable boon. And the boon being what it is, they will at the

same time confer it upon the whole nation, and especially upon that portion of it for which I am now specially claiming their sympathy and help—that portion which is at the bottom. If there is any section of society which stands out uniquely as representative of those at the top, it is that section which is educated at the public schools. Could not public school boys be greatly assisted by their education to see that it is their duty to remedy the pitiful and unfair destitution of those at the bottom? May we be permitted to hope that this great possibility will some day, and some not distant day, be realised?

I have stated above that anything that I can write on this subject here must necessarily be very meagre, and only in the nature of outlines. But I will make an exception in the following suggestions.

The means seem to be ready to hand by which public school boys could be brought more closely into contact with boys of the poorer classes, with the best possible results to both. At almost all public schools there are entrance scholarships. Could not a certain proportion of these be awarded each year to boys educated at the elementary schools? I am well aware of the objections, many and various, that can be brought against this proposal. Of

these I will instance only two—the two which I believe would be regarded by most public school masters as among the most serious of all.

First, it may be objected that the subjects taught at the elementary schools are so different from those demanded by the public schools in their scholarship examinations, that it would be very difficult either to select suitable boys from the elementary schools, or, supposing the selection to be made, for the boys selected to hold their own in their progress through the public schools. In other words, it would be a failure intellectually. Secondly, public school boys would not mix freely and naturally with the boys from the elementary schools. In other words, it would be a failure socially. Both subjects are wide and vexed and there is much that could be said about them, and all that I can say now is very little.

In the first place, there has for some years been a movement in favour of making the intellectual education of a boy, previous to his entering a public school, much less specialised than it has been in the past. For example, it has been proposed to drop Greek altogether out of the curriculum of preparatory schools, and thus to find more time to devote to other subjects, and especially to the subject

of 'English,' with all that schoolmasters know to be included under that most comprehensive word. Now all this tends in the direction of having a common basis of subjects taught to young boys, to whatever class they may belong. And this makes it easier, of course, to test boys of all classes, under, say, the age of fourteen, in a common examination. And this is a convenient age for the public schools' scholarship examinations.

I have avoided technicalities, and I hope I have made my points clear both to schoolmasters and outsiders. Briefly restated, they are as follows: There has been for some years a marked movement against specialising the intellectual education of young boys previous to their entering the public schools. This movement happens also to tend in the direction of making a common basis for the subjects taught to all boys of whatever class. What I would suggest is, that, with the view of being able to elect boys from the elementary schools to their scholarships, the public school authorities should do all they can to promote this movement.

With regard to the second objection, all I have to say is this. Public school boys have the merits and defects of their qualities. Among these merits there is a strong sense of justice

and fair-play; and there is the instinct of generosity and chivalry which they share in common with all youth. Let the public school masters make full use of these great qualities, and I have not the smallest doubt as to the result.

The second suggestion is this. In connection with many of the public schools there are established missions in the poor districts of London or other great towns. Endeavours are already made to interest the members of the schools in these missions; and all that I have now to suggest is that the aim should be to increase this interest in every way, and to make it as far as possible *concrete*.

A few words must be added upon a subject which falls naturally into its place here.

To the lack of imagination is due, I believe, very largely the difficulty that most members of the upper classes have in realising the condition of those at the bottom, with the necessary consequences — consequences disastrous to themselves and to those whose sufferings it is their duty to remedy. Having said this, I have little else to say. For the faculty of imagination is, at least among adults, a rare possession. But it can, I suppose, be cultivated with more prospect of success in youth than later. Is it

possible that here too a boy might be helped more than he is by his public school education? I raise the question with a full sense of its difficulty. If the public schools can help here, and—for this is my special object now—can help public school boys to realise through their intellects and imaginations the pitifulness and the injustice of the condition of the very poor, what will they not have done for us all?

## CHAPTER XVI

### Obstacles—(*continued*)

### *A Mistaken View of Human Nature*

To what has been said before incidentally on the subject of human nature something must be added here.

When I have in conversation been urging the obligation that lies upon those at the top to relieve the pitiful necessities of those at the bottom, among the various objections that have been brought forward is this: 'Human nature being what it is, it is unreasonable to expect that those at the top will be inclined to make the sacrifices necessary for the performance of this obligation.' Among those who urge this objection there will be some in whose natures are to be seen evidences of some of the finest qualities that exist in human nature. Moreover, these very persons may be actually engaged in the practical work of doing all they can to alleviate misery, and may be sacrificing a good deal in the pursuit of that end. The objection may be

brought by persons of trained intelligence, active sympathies, and devoted practical goodness. If I believed the objection to be unanswerable, the appeal that I am now making I could never have made at all; for it would have been doomed to failure, and I should have known that such was its doom. If it were owing to the weakness or the wickedness of human nature that men are prevented from putting into action their highest impulses, then not only would it be idle for me to make any such appeal as I am now making, but it would be idle to have confidence in any real human progress at all.

The subject ranks among the greatest that can exercise human thought. It is not, therefore, to be expected that in the few words which alone are permissible now I can do more than indicate some of its outlines.

The truth is that, *human nature being what it is*, there is no limit that can be set to the achievements of human beings, in so far as those achievements are dependent upon the exercise of such qualities as justice, mercy, sympathy, and love, and upon the sacrifices that may be necessary for the purpose of giving effect to the impulses that may proceed from such great qualities. I believe that so far from its being true that, human nature being what it is, those at the

top cannot be expected to come to the aid of those at the bottom, the exact opposite is the case. On the contrary, almost the sole grounds for our expectation that those at the top will come to the aid of those at the bottom is that human nature is what it is.

Consider for a moment what human nature is, and under what grievous difficulties it has attained to its present position. The greatest human thing known to a human being is human nature, and the greatest thing in human nature is the love that is in it. If I am told that the greatest thing in human nature is that which is divine in it, I have only to say that that which is divine in it is the love that is in it, inasmuch as the only divinity conceivable to me is the divinity of Love. I declare that human nature, as I have known it and as it has been revealed to me in some human beings, is of such a kind that, when I think of it, when I try to realise it, to get at what it really means, I am baffled by the sense of something present in it too great for thought; and how much too great, then, for words! And the greatness lies mainly, I think, in a certain supreme, disinterested reality, and an infinite humility of love, which do really seem to bring me into contact with an ultimate and essential reality and love which

—if ever the word is to be used at all—is divine.

Such, in so far as I can express it at all in a few words, is the quality of human nature, and what we may with certainty expect from it. It is the greatest human thing that we know ; and there is nothing that we may not expect from it. Our hopes for the righting of this particular wrong—the misery of those at the bottom—are based solely upon the greatness of human nature. Without this we should have to despair. With it, we not only have hope, but our hope is confident.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PLAN OF ACTION

THE plan that I have proposed for remedying the pitiful and unjust condition of those at the bottom has been already set forth at length. The plan is, that those at the top should without delay come to the aid of those at the bottom, and, out of their own vast abundance, should remedy the corresponding destitution of these. If this plan is adopted, I believe absolutely that the whole thing would be remedied and remedied swiftly, and with nothing but blessed consequences to those who effect the cure and to those who are cured, and to the whole community of which these two extreme sections are members. Moreover, I believe this to be the *only* plan which will effect the cure, and at the same time effect it swiftly, and with nothing but the best results to all concerned.

This being so, it would seem that all I have now to do has been done when I briefly recapitu-

late—as I have just recapitulated—the gist of the plan; for this plan really is the beginning and the ending of all that I have written. This is my plan of action.

Yes; but it would seem that this is not enough. I am told that, unless I include in the plan some details of constructive suggestions as to *how* the members of the upper classes should set to work, I might fail in my purpose—fail, that is, in effecting the cure of the evil that I set out to cure. The absence of such a plan might, I am told, be fatal. This view has been pressed upon me by so many persons, representing such various individualities and sympathies, that it has been impossible for me to set it aside, simply because I did not attach to it the importance that was attached to it by them. I append, therefore, some outlines of a constructive scheme of action.

But a few more words must be added before I outline the scheme. In outlining it, I must not be taken to recede from my own position. I regard my plan, as stated above, as sufficient in itself. If I can persuade the upper classes, *as a united body*, to undertake to deal with the situation, I shall consider that my purpose—the remedying of the evil—is achieved, and achieved in the best conceivable way, and with the best

conceivable results. That is, I believe absolutely that if the upper classes were unanimously to resolve to come to the aid of those at the bottom, with the resolute determination to remedy their condition, they would most certainly achieve their purpose, and achieve it swiftly. The infinitely varied capacities and sympathies of the members of the upper classes would, I believe, overcome all the difficulties, and would succeed in remedying the evil.

Having thus made clear my position, I will now do what I can to supply what I am told would, if omitted, be a fatal omission.

The first—and absolutely necessary—condition of success in any scheme of action is that those who undertake it—that is, in this case, the members of the upper classes—should do so *as a united body and with the set determination to succeed.* Without this, however perfect the organisation, however devoted the action of individuals, however great the expenditure of time and money, the scheme is predestined to failure. I may be told that it is unlikely that this condition will be satisfied. With this I am not concerned. What I am concerned with is that on any other hypothesis there can only be failure.

On the hypothesis, then, that the members of the upper classes set about the business

unitedly and with the determination to succeed, the outlines of the scheme, the means and the methods to be employed, with some details of the organisation, seem fairly simple.

The means to be employed to attain the end will be money and personal service.

The part that money plays is so subordinate, and the amount required, when compared with what is available, is so small, that there is no occasion to say anything more about it till we come to consider the methods of contribution, and this will come under the head of organisation.

With personal service it is very different. Upon the quantity and the quality of this hangs everything. The *whole body* of the upper classes, whose health and age render them capable of being useful, must be available. This being so, the work falling upon each individual member would be comparatively small. Whatever calls it may be necessary to make upon the leisure time of any individual must be satisfied. That is, no other methods of employing leisure time must take precedence of this. Of personal service an immense amount will be absolutely necessary if the plan is to succeed—that is, if the cure is to be complete. But, bearing in mind the number of necessitous persons to

be dealt with—which is, according to our hypothesis, strictly limited—and the number of persons available to deal with them, and the amount of leisure time at their disposal, the personal service available would also be immense, and far more than sufficient for the successful accomplishment of the purpose in hand. And not only would it be ample in quantity, it would also be more than ample, it would be splendid, in quality.

The necessities of the destitute poor are indeed almost infinitely varied and multiform. But they are not more varied than are the qualities of those who will have set out to remedy them. There is, I believe, no form of human suffering or need, in so far as it is remediable at all by human aid and sympathy, which could not be dealt with and remedied by the united devotion of the members of the upper classes. This may, of course, be true also for other members of other communities. But I speak now of those that I know best, and I speak with certainty. The women and the girls, the older and the younger men of this class, in the variety of their qualities and attainments are splendidly equipped for the performance of such a work. To their abilities, attainments, resourcefulness, capacities for devotion, if once all

these are called upon for the performance of a great purpose which appeals to their sense of justice and their sympathy with great and undeserved suffering, no work is too difficult or too exacting, nothing is impossible.

These, then, are the means to be employed to attain the end—money and personal service. Let me now consider the methods of employing them, or, in other words, the spirit which must permeate the whole thing if there is to be success. For it is not only true that the most lavish expenditure of money, if spent in the wrong way—and in the wrong way I include also the wrong spirit—might be worse than useless, might leave things worse than it found them. The same is true also of personal service. The most lavish expenditure of personal service, if spent in the wrong way, might end only in failure. The service must not only be perfectly voluntary, a free gift, but the spirit that possesses the donor must also be of a certain quality. If there is any touch of condescension, if the service is inspired by duty only, and by nothing warmer than this, the chances of success will be so much the smaller. The chances of success, in other words, will be in strict proportion to the quality of the spirit in which the enterprise is undertaken and carried through. The essence of this quality can

be expressed in very few words. If you come really in your heart to regard these people, to whose aid you have come, as your equals, everything is done, success is insured. If not, little is done, or nothing; there will be failure.

Test the sincerity and the reality of your attitude towards them as social equals in this way. Can you think of them, in regard to their social equality, as of members of your own class? Given, that is, favourable conditions of neighbourhood, would you, if they were your neighbours, wish to make them your friends, as you would wish to do with members of your own class if they were your neighbours in the country? You may test the sincerity of this wish by another question. Would you desire to be their neighbours, to live close to them? This question goes down to the root of the whole matter. Without some real knowledge of these people, without some familiarity with them, it is impossible to answer the question with any certainty that the answer will be true. If, then, you have no real knowledge of such people—and by real knowledge I mean the knowledge that comes from free and easy familiarity—it is impossible to answer it now; you must wait until such knowledge is yours. If, possessed of such knowledge, you are sure you can answer

the question affirmatively, it is impossible that you will not succeed. Possessing, then, the sense of equality with them, and the desire that they should be your friends, and therefore your neighbours, you will come to their aid with that spirit within you which is inevitably destined to bring success; for, with the desire that you should be their neighbours, there will follow the determination that you will be such.

And this brings me to the mention of that which alone can bring to us all health and happiness, alone can make us realise the best that is in us, whether as individuals or as a nation. And this is, that whether we are to-day members of this class or of that, possessed of this amount of what are called the goods of this world or of that, we should, with no reference to any such differences, live as neighbours to one another. That is, there should be, so far as these differences go, no west end and no east.

I can enlarge no more upon this. But the point is strictly pertinent to this special subject, and, if I was to deal with the subject at all, it was quite impossible to leave it out. There can be nothing but failure if those who undertake the work do not undertake it in the right spirit; and there can be nothing but success if they do. And the test of the right spirit is their right

sense of social equality; and the test of the sincerity of this is their desire to be the neighbours of those whom they set out to aid. And the test of the sincerity of this desire is their resolve to put it into practice—their resolve, that is, to live near to them. The doing of this may not be immediately practicable; but this should be the aim, and only when this aim is attained will there be peace and joy among us, whether as individuals or as a nation.

Such is the method, the spirit, in which the enterprise must be undertaken, if it is to succeed. With any other method it is sure to fail. With this it is sure to succeed.

We have now to consider how, with these means and with this method at our disposal, they can be most skilfully disposed of; in other words, we have to consider the scientific organisation of them.

To start with, a representative committee of the upper classes should be formed, and should draw up a statement setting forth the deplorable and unfair condition of things prevalent among those at the bottom, and the duty of the upper classes alone to set the whole thing right. I am not, of course, concerned here with the contents of the statement, but will only say that the whole case would have to be stated, and, consistently

with completeness, as concisely as possible. There would follow meetings, public and private, in all parts. And the whole country would be divided into a great many different sections, the object being to provide that the condition of the necessitous poor should be so thoroughly investigated that no case that would be classed among those that it was determined to deal with could possibly escape notice. In whatever part of the country such a case were found, some member of the upper classes would be at hand to deal with it.

Entering further into details, let us consider first the supply of money sufficient for the carrying out of the purpose. The resources available among the whole body of the well-to-do classes are so immense, so almost bewilderingly vast, that it is really inconceivable that this part of the business should ever be regarded as presenting serious difficulties by anyone who is willing to give thought to the subject. I will not quote statistics; I will only state that the pecuniary contributions that would be needed would, if they were made roughly proportionate to the respective means of the contributors, involve no great sacrifices, certainly no greater than we ought to be willing to make for the accomplishment of so great a purpose.

It remains to say something regarding the method of deciding what in each individual case the contribution to the general fund should be. As there is no difficulty about the resources that are available, so certainly there is none about the method of collection. In the case of persons who are set upon the performance of this high purpose, no difficulties will be placed in the way of obtaining such information as will be necessary for the fair apportionment of the contributions. The whole thing, of course, would be absolutely private. The money available from the persons concerned would naturally vary immensely; it would vary from the one extreme of *nil* to the other extreme—whatever that may be. But the enterprise being what it is, and the individuals who are entering upon it being what they are, there would, I repeat, be no difficulty whatever either about providing the money or the method of collecting it.

When we come to deal with personal service it is another matter. The apportionment of this presents many difficulties. I do not think it is possible to lay down even general rules that may be applicable to individual cases. Age, strength, time, leisure, capacities, attainments, distance—such are only samples of all sorts of difficulties that must occur in the arrangements

of the details of personal service. But at the same time it must be remembered that such difficulties are greatly lessened when we consider the immense amount of material available for the purpose, and the various forms of machinery and organisations that already exist for the performance of similar work, and that would be available for the performance of this.

Take, as an illustration, London alone. There are already engaged in the work of alleviating the necessities of the very poor in London armies of skilled and devoted persons, from the seasoned veteran to the last girl recruit, most of whom would be only too eager to enter upon a business which had for its object, not the alleviation merely but the curing of the evil, with the determination to carry that purpose through.

In that last clause lies the essence of the whole thing. For, in the case of a body of persons composed of such stuff as these persons are composed of, no difficulties of any kind could prevent them from carrying their purpose through, provided that they are *resolutely determined* to carry it through. On their possessing or not possessing this determination will hang their success or their failure; and in proportion to the quality of their resolution will be the swiftness of their success.

These are the suggestions that I have to make regarding the plan of action. Briefly summarised, they amount to this.

The members of the upper classes possess in ample abundance the qualities, attainments, leisure, and means to carry this purpose through with complete success. This being so, the sole and certain condition of success is that they should determine to succeed. The sacrifice of money would be small. The sacrifice of personal service would be greater; but, considering the amount and the quality of the available material, it is believed that it would not be very great. Still, it might be considerable, and a word must be added on this point, for on it the whole thing hinges. On the quantity and the quality of the personal service absolutely everything depends.

Money is necessary. But money alone, however lavishly it might be bestowed, is perfectly useless for the accomplishment of the purpose. It has been by inhumanity that these people have reached their present condition; it is only by humanity that that condition can be remedied. Without the full recognition of this, the best plan of action would be doomed to failure. With it, whatever be the plan of action, there can only be predestined success.

I must end as I began. My belief in the success of the general plan that I have proposed —the undertaking of the business by the members of the upper classes in the right spirit—is absolute. But the details of scientific organisation are another matter. In comparison with the thousands of practical workers and able and experienced organisers, not only in this particular department, but in all the other numberless departments of national life and activities, I am the merest amateur, and my meagre suggestions towards scientific organisation may perhaps seem to be of little or no value. Granted the introduction of my general plan, I leave the whole question of organisation in the hands of those who will undertake it, with complete confidence in their ability and their devotion, and complete certainty that they will succeed.

To prevent any possible misconceptions regarding the scope of the preceding suggestions, I will add something on this point.

The object of this particular appeal is, it will be remembered, to lay the foundations of a complete and final remedy for the terrible condition of a certain very limited section of society—the million or so at the bottom. The intention is to give an object lesson which may

be followed up through the whole of the twelve millions or more that are on 'the verge of hunger.' This million of people having been rescued from their pitiable condition by the means and the method mentioned above, and set on the way towards independence and security—*what next?*

Those who are unable to work are, by our hypothesis, provided for in the best way—that is, in the way that has been discovered by those best able to discover it. Similarly also, those who can work are working, and working at the kinds of work adapted to their age and sex and capacities, and are receiving for such work such payment as will enable them to satisfy the requirements of a reasonable human existence. This is their *living wage*. The circumstances and idiosyncrasies of them all have, by our hypothesis, been thoroughly investigated by capable and sympathetic persons; and there have been established between the members of these two extremes of society familiar and friendly relations, and many friendships. Neighbourhood has produced neighbourliness, and this has often passed into something closer. The basis of it all is the doing away with the whole artificial barriers of class, with all that this implies, and the establishment of social equality.

Such is the condition of things brought about among these people by the united co-operation of all the members of the upper classes. It is, by our hypothesis, sound as far as it goes; for it has been set on foot by men and women possessed of an almost infinite variety of capacities, sympathies, and experience. And the organisation has been provided by the brains of the best organisers that the country possesses, the best experts in scientific organisation.

This is the condition of things. It is as perfect as it can be made, *as far as it goes, and for the time being*. As such, it is an object-lesson for the whole community, and is therefore of absolutely incalculable value. But how is it to be maintained, and how is it to be extended? It is perfect for the time being and for the limited number of persons that it affects. These were so pitiably placed that they could not wait for a general plan to be extended to all whose condition is only in various degrees less urgently pitiable—that is, all the wage-earners whose wages are insufficient to provide them with secure independence, all those who live 'on the verge of hunger.' What is to be done for *all these*? How is the object-lesson to be extended to them, and how is the thing to be made permanent? It is on the right lines, and it affects

the most desperately necessitous. How is the thing to be rendered safe and applicable to all?

This question, involving the whole subject of which living wages and pensions and housing are only specimens, I did not set out to answer, and I shall, of course, make no attempt to answer it now. If I have done something towards providing a solution of the very limited problem which was propounded on the first page, I am content.

With such words I should have liked to end what I have to say now about the doing of this one special deed of justice, the righting of this one special wrong—words that contemplated not alleviation but cure; not failure but success. Still, there is another side, and it must be faced.

The appeal that I have made to the upper classes was of course made seriously—that is, with the hope that it might succeed. Without this hope I could not have made it, for it would have been devoid of sincerity. It may to some seem foolish of me to have hoped that I should be successful in persuading the members of the upper classes voluntarily and unitedly to undertake such a serious business, with the sacrifices necessary to the performance of it. Still so it was.

The possibility, however, that the appeal may fail must be faced. But there are various degrees of failure. I may fail in persuading the members of the upper classes to take the whole thing in hand voluntarily and unitedly, and with the determination to carry it through to a successful end. If so, then I shall have failed in that which I set out to do. But there may be still a certain number, possibly a considerable number, who desire to do something more than they have hitherto done in alleviation of the evil, even though the complete remedy of it has to be deferred. And by some of these the question may be put to me—'Have you nothing to suggest of a less sweeping nature than your own original proposal? Is it reasonable that, having made this large proposal and failed to carry it in its entirety, you should refuse to make any suggestions at all in the direction of, at any rate, some further and larger, though still only partial, relief of these destitute and neglected people?'

If the upper classes will not act as a body in this direction, and persist in their refusal, they will have lost their chance, they will suffer for it; and—more than this—the country and humanity will suffer for it. It would be a deplorable loss. Still, such a possibility has to be faced.

The question, then, is—What should we of our own free will do now, on the supposition that there may be some delay before the whole body of the upper classes do their duty as a united body, or that they never do it at all?

The difficulty of answering the question in detail is immense, owing to the fact that our individual capacities and resources are so infinitely different and varied. On the other hand, the difficulty is lessened, owing to another fact. Those who ask the question show, by the mere fact of their asking it, that they have resolved to do all they can as individuals, and in collaboration with all who will collaborate, to remedy the evil. Bearing in mind both these facts, I will try to give an answer to the question.

First, much that I have written elsewhere on the plan of action is applicable here. The means at our disposal are time and money; and the spirit in which these are to be expended has been explained in some detail there, and I need therefore only refer back to it. Nothing, of course, can take the place of personal service, face to face, and in direct, familiar, personal contact with those whom we desire to aid. But, supposing that opportunities for this are, for various reasons, scarce, and that we are not satisfied with the small amount that we can ourselves do in

this direction, I see nothing for it but to aid as liberally as possible those whom we know to be spending time and money with knowledge and sympathy, and who are themselves in close, familiar, personal contact with those whom they are helping.

For some of us time, money, and strength may seem to be very limited. There are, of course, cases where this is so; but, after a good deal of observation, I have come to the conclusion that the cases among the members of the upper classes where *no* time, *no* money, *no* strength are available for any demands beyond those absolutely required by personal and family duties, are very few. It is also a fact that some who have no money to spare, and almost no time, give freely of both. Some of us can contribute to the attainment of justice, kindness, and love by money, some by personal service, some by both—*very few* by neither. The varieties of personal service are countless. Do not forget that among these are numbered what can be done by writing and by speech, and that in both of these cases the amount of good done —that is, the lasting effect produced—is not necessarily to be estimated by the quantity or publicity of either, but by the quality and the reality of it.

Remember, too, when you have done all that you can in this way, that it is only the way of patches and palliatives; concessions only to your impatience to *do something* rather than do nothing; but that the only true way is the ideal way, and that the ideal way here is not alleviation but cure; not what is temporary, but what is final. With this in our minds, we certainly need not be afraid of making mistakes by our action; the only thing we need be afraid of is inaction.

There is something still to add.

I may be met by an objection that cannot be passed by unnoticed, for it goes to the root of the whole thing, and, if I regarded it as valid, it would have been useless for me to undertake it at all. The objection is this: It is unreasonable for me to expect those at the top to do as I have appealed to them to do—to come to the aid of those at the bottom, and out of their own superfluity to remedy their penury. It is added that perhaps they *ought* to do this, but that—putting it bluntly—they won't, and that I ought to know that they won't. Well, I entirely disagree. It seems to me perfectly reasonable to expect it. Why is it unreasonable? Why won't they? They have, by the hypothesis, more than they need—more money, more leisure. Why is it

unreasonable that they should part with some of these to those who have—through no fault of their own—so much less? Why won't they? What is it that prevents their doing it? Am I told that it is human nature? I have already written about this, and will only add here that if they ever do perform this obligation, it is their human nature alone that will make them perform it.

Are you one of those who object, and think it unreasonable that you should be expected to make these sacrifices? Let me ask you, then—Why do you object? Is it your selfishness? I think not. Take a test. A child lies helpless at your door, and can get no help but from you. Should you refuse out of your superfluity to give it help? No. But all these people lie helpless at your door—only, *you can't see them.* What really is mainly at fault is your lack of imagination.

Imagination has been defined as 'the power of representing things absent to oneself or others.' That is precisely what you can't do—you can't represent to yourself these neglected people, you can't see them because they are absent, and therefore you do not help them. I have seen them, and I have tried to make you see them. But if you have read what I have written and

you still think it unreasonable that you should be expected to help them, then I have failed to make you see them through my eyes, and the only thing left is for you to see them through your own. If you do this, and still think that this is an unreasonable expectation—well, then, there is, I suppose, an end of it. But until you have done this, you should refuse—as I refuse—to allow that what I appeal to you to do is an unreasonable, a Utopian, appeal.

So much seemed necessary to say here, in answer to this objection. It is for me no objection at all, nor do I believe that it would be for others, were it not for a defect of imagination—a defect which is common to almost all of us. In this particular case the defect can be remedied by actual sight. Will you not remedy it in this way?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE EMPTY SHELLS

If any of my readers do not realise even yet the injustice and pitifulness of that which I have brought before them; if my eyes and my thoughts have through the frail medium of printed words failed to convince, there still remains for them one source of inspiration, and it is a source that could, I think, hardly fail to inspire. They must use their own eyes, and get through them that which they have failed to get through the eyes of another. Such a failure need not necessarily bring disappointment either to him or to them. For almost all of us it remains true that 'things seen are mightier than things heard.' For myself, at least, I hardly think I should have realised the injustice and the pitifulness of the situation with sufficient force to impose upon me such action as I have taken, unless I had seen things with my own eyes, seen them at first hand. The sympathy springing from my imagination alone would not, I think, of itself have had

sufficient depth, sufficient heat, to make me feel as I do about all this. I had, at last, such a sense of shame and indignation against myself as rendered hesitation and delay impossible, and some sort of action, the best that seemed possible, inevitable. And what has happened to me may well happen to others.

There are, we are thankful to know, multitudes of men and women—more women doubtless than men—whose elementary and instinctive human sympathies are so sensitive and so imperious, that a tale of human suffering and helplessness is for them a sight of such. But for others of us it is not always so. And if there are any of my readers who, owing to the weakness of my words or of their imagination, or to a combination of both, have failed to gain the momentum necessary for effectual action, I do beseech them to go and use their own eyes and their own ears, to see and hear things for themselves, on the spot, in their ordinary, natural surroundings, in some such informal and familiar way as I have seen and heard them, and as it is possible for anyone to see and hear them. Apart from their natural human surroundings and associations, and the easy familiarity of intercourse that accompanies these, the impression produced is a different impression. And though

it may for some be successful in the final purpose of stimulating them to action, for others it may in such final purpose fail.

For example, there must have been many who were greatly moved by what they saw and heard at the Exhibition of Sweated Industries held in London last year[1] under the auspices of the *Daily News*. To what extent the momentum thus acquired was sufficiently powerful to impel to effective action those who were influenced by it, I don't know; but that real substantial good was done by the Exhibition admits surely of no doubt. I should, however, believe that to those who had already seen what was to be seen and heard what was to be heard, on the spot, and in the homes of these sweated industries, little was added by what they then saw and heard under such different surroundings. So at any rate it was with me. And I do most urgently beg those of my readers, if any there be, whom I have failed to stimulate to effective action in this particular matter, to go and see and hear things for themselves, on the spot.

I had but just entered manhood when my eyes first fell upon the sight, and my ears first heard the tale, of the misery and squalor of a London slum. What I then saw and heard

[1] 1906.

left me other than it found me. The improvised cradle, in the form of a crazy little egg-box, in which lay the last newcomer that opened its impartial eyes upon the new world that we call its home, has remained ever since in my mind as the strange centre of a spectacle that was to me in those early days largely new. The ways and moods of memory and imagination are many and of many forms, and often obscure. How is it that for me this crazy little box, knocked together to carry across the seas a consignment of alien eggs, carrying now the fresh consignment of a newborn baby—how is it that, for me, this crazy egg-box cradle is invariably connected, not with the egg itself, which stands for a proverb as 'full of meat,' but with the broken and empty shell, which may well stand for a proverb for what is frail, illusory, and void? Is it that the injustice of the way in which the goods of this world are divided among those at the top and those at the bottom forced itself upon me in the mocking figure of the inside of the egg for those, and of the outside for these? I don't know. But I do know that it is only the broken and barren shell, and never the egg itself, which I see when I recall the egg-box and its baby occupant, as I saw them in the late sixties, the precursors of

those fat years in England when, as Mr. Gladstone told us, the nation's wealth was increasing 'by leaps and bounds.' What, in those rich years, of the leaps and bounds in the Isle of Dogs? What was the share of these poor people in the increase of wealth that was so strange and unaccountable as to assume for some of those who were almost smothered by it a sort of comic aspect? One of these, looking back to those fat years, once told me that the amount of money he made in them was 'simply ridiculous.' What was the share of the Isle of Dogs in this gay absurdity of the frolicsome antics of wealth? The eggs in those rich days were many, and there was much meat for all, and great surfeit of it. The share of the Isle of Dogs was the empty shells, and there was surfeit enough of these there.

It was the shells only that I seemed to see there forty years ago. It is the shells only that I have seen ever since, and that I see to-day as I write these words, as the portion of the poor. It is a figure, but it is a figure that truly represents the reality; and it may serve the only legitimate purpose to which such a figure can be turned—that of forcing upon us the reality. And the reality is, the existence of an unfairness and injustice, which is never less than

shameful, and often no less than cruel. It was the same for me then, all those years ago, in the Isle of Dogs. It has been the same for me ever since, whenever and wherever I have seen such sights and heard such sounds, from one end of Great Britain to the other.

And it is the same to-day. It fills me with the sense not only of its pitifulness, but of its cruel and shameful injustice; and, further, with indignation and remorse that I, along with the other members of the class to which I belong, am doing absolutely nothing—I do not say to alleviate the thing, for all of us may be doing this—but nothing towards that which alone should satisfy us, the complete and final remedying of it. And the intolerableness of the situation is this.

First of all, it is we that are undoubtedly mainly responsible for it. And next, we, we alone, unassisted by a single member of any other class could, if we set about it now in the right way and in the right spirit—and if we had the right spirit we should find the right way—remedy the whole thing, right this one particular wrong, finally and for ever. And—for it is with this the chapter started, and with this it must end—if you have not been brought to feel this by any other means, it is impossible for me to believe

that, if you were to go and see and hear for yourselves all that you may see and hear, you would not only be irresistibly impelled to act yourselves, but also to urge on others of your own class to similar action. And this gained, the whole thing would be gained and the whole shame removed. And the class that is mainly responsible for the shame, and that unaided and alone could remove it, would have removed it, with untold blessings not only to those whose unjust and pitiful lot they remedy, but with untold blessings also to themselves, far greater, because more inward and subtle, than those which they confer, and with an example to humanity unique in its history.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HOPES AND FEARS

This is all that I can write now—this is my case. Have I made it good?

I have read it over with the endeavour to put myself outside it, to judge it fairly; and my answer is, that I have made it good. That is, I believe I have shown that it is the duty of those at the top to come, *without delay and in a united body*, to the aid of those at the bottom, and to remedy their evil condition. I see no escape from this conclusion. The conclusion seems inevitable, simply and solely as coming out of the facts, out of the case presented; and I shall therefore take it for granted.

What are the chances that they will or will not perform this duty?

If they do not, it will, I think, be due mainly to the meanness and the power of wealth. If they do, it will, I am sure, be due wholly to the greatness and the power of human nature. Let me compare and balance these two.

Some of the effects of wealth have been dealt with already, but there is something to be added here. Its effects to-day upon those who have it and those who desire to have it are, in their tendencies, grievously injurious to those very qualities which the members of the upper classes must possess if they are to do their duty in this matter. It is, I think, largely the meanness of wealth that tends to prevent those who possess or desire it, and that must prevent those who love it, from having worthy ideals. It is this largely that gives it its power. It lowers men's ideals by giving them itself as their ideal—the lowest, perhaps, that has ever been set up in the history of humanity. Its power to-day over the well-to-do is very great; so great that I fear I cannot be absolutely sure that it will not indefinitely defer the day when they will be impelled from within to follow their best impulses; that is, I cannot conceal my anxiety with regard to the near future.

But there is another side. The power of wealth is immense to-day; but its position is very insecure.

First, the thing itself is essentially mean; and though meanness may be powerful for awhile, its influence is always unsafe and always transient. Again, the evil power of wealth

exists, not in obedience to the nature of those whom it injures, but in opposition to it. It is from without a man, and is opposed to all that is best within him—opposed, that is, to his nature.

And this brings us to our hopes. There is in humanity nothing so great as human nature. This being so, the greatness of human nature must, if full time be granted it, at last prevail. Yes; but this does not touch our present anxiety. Is it, in regard to this one matter that concerns us just now, to prevail quickly? Will the greatest thing in those to whom I appeal—their human nature—prevail over the meanest thing—the money thing—to-day, or to-morrow, or when? To-day may be in time, perhaps even to-morrow; but there is a time when it may be too late for our purpose. Is it possible that the mean thing may prevail among them till it is too late; too late, that is, for the upper classes, *of their own free will and under no compulsion from without*, to come to the aid of those at the bottom? I don't know. Sometimes I fear, sometimes I hope.

Whether I am right or wrong in assigning so much meanness and so much power to the influence of wealth, may be questioned. But no one who has thought much about it is, I

believe, likely to think that I am wrong in assigning so much greatness and so much power to the nature within a man, to human nature.

If that which is greatest in them prevails *now*, and they do, therefore, remedy this particular evil at once—what then? I will not attempt to answer. But I know that the reach and the promise of it all is incalculably, unimaginably great. If not—well, if not, still the remedy will come some day and by some means, for the thing to be remedied is unjust, it cannot last. But when the day, and what the means will be, no one can tell. We know that the day may be long in coming, and we fear that it may be very long; and we know that among the means by which it comes will be force and violence, bitterness and hatred, and all such things. And though the full fruit of all this we do not know, yet, by the taste of it that we have had already, we know that it is foul.

But these reflections shall not end with fears. I cannot somehow bring myself to believe that we can go on much longer resisting all the finest and strongest impulses of our natures, and failing to right once and for ever this great wrong. I end, therefore, not with fear but with hope; and I do so, not because this is easier and

pleasanter for me, but because I have found that, with the very rarest exceptions, the hopes that are based upon belief and trust in that which is best and greatest in others are more to be trusted—come, I mean, more right in the end—than the fears which are based upon that which is less good and less great in them. The hope, that is, with which I end is a reasonable hope, and therefore I end with it.

But this is only one very limited portion of an almost limitless whole. The whole system of modern society is false, because it is falsely based. We know it, and we are therefore, as I have said before, dissatisfied, uneasy in our conscience. If we try to ignore this or to stifle it, and are successful in the attempt, we shall have accomplished our ruin. With our own hands we shall have taken our life ; for we shall have slain our conscience.

If this uneasiness of conscience is not calmed by letting it have its way, but is stifled and smothered by suppression, there will result ease it is true, but it will be only the lethal ease of death—death to us of this generation and to our opportunities, death to us and to our feeble ways ; but that is all. For conscience and the sense of justice and all such things do not die ; they are scotched only, they are not killed.

They are dead in us to-day—if so we determine —for we shall have slain them with our own hands; but we cannot slay them for ever, and those that are to come, it may be to-morrow or it may be the next day, shall give full freedom and life to what is noblest and greatest within them, and they shall know the joy that we might have known if we had cared to know it.

There will be no real joy for any of us, and no real good for England, till we have faced and realised all this. And this done, we shall be at the beginning of the end; and the end is the prevalence of the best. The best will prevail some day—whatever else I doubt, I never doubt that. It is to hasten the coming of that day, and to sweeten the intervening days, that I have brought forward this particular plan, have made this particular appeal. But I could never have made it at all unless it had been made as a part of a whole; unless it was to be the beginning of an end in which an appeal to one extreme of society to aid another extreme would be meaningless, for there would be no such extremes existing.

Of one thing we may be quite sure—things cannot remain as they are. And by this I do not mean to utter the truism—for it is to me at least a truism—that things are moving up-

wards, and that if the world lasts long enough, perfection—such perfection as is possible to beings that are born and die—will one day be reached. I mean that we have arrived to-day in England at a crisis. An immense majority of the people of this country are profoundly dissatisfied with things as they are, and are becoming every day more and more acutely conscious of this dissatisfaction, both as individuals and as a community. That is, the dissatisfaction is known and felt by us to exist. We know that we are dissatisfied, and that almost everybody else is dissatisfied also. Further, the dissatisfaction is of a particular kind. It goes down to the very roots of things, down to the very foundation of society, down to the whole system of society as it exists to-day.

Persons who are not accustomed to think about such things, or not accustomed to express their thoughts, would usually find it impossible to define this dissatisfaction. And one of the reasons why they could not do so, and one of the reasons why some thoughtful people also find it difficult to do so, is precisely because the thing does go down so deep, does go down to fundamentals—does, in a word, go down to the whole constitution of society in England to-day. This dissatisfaction is instinctive, and the instinct

is one of the greatest in human nature. It is the instinct of justice. Things as they are are profoundly unjust, *and we know that they are.*

The system of society to-day in England rests mainly upon the most rotten foundation and the most sordid and vulgar principle known to us—the foundation and the principle of wealth, 'the least erected spirit of all.' And this is mainly why the system is so shockingly unjust, and why the sense of dissatisfaction with it is so wide, so deep, so irresistible, and so urgent. That, at least, is my explanation of it. But whatever be the explanation of it, the dissatisfaction is there, and is what it is because the instinct, the sense of justice is profoundly outraged. And we all, according to the degree of our knowledge, our imagination, and our sympathy, are conscious of this. The whole nation is conscious of it, and is aware of its consciousness, is aware of it increasingly every day. We do indeed feel that our national arrangements are such that the good things—not material only—are very unfairly divided amongst us, and that a much fairer division ought to be made. This feeling is growing every day, and is based upon all that is clearest and deepest in our thoughts and noblest in our natures. Surely it is high time to act, as a united

body, as a nation, for the good of the whole. Surely it is high time to assert our birthright —for we are born for co-operation.

We have been familiarised with the expressions used to contrast the methods of nature in the course of evolution with what should be the methods of man ; and the ' cosmic process ' and the ' ethical process ' have now taken their place as convenient phrases to express those respective processes. Surely it is high time that the cosmic process should come to an end and the ethical process take its place ; the ethical process is indeed long overdue. The cosmic process has had its day, and a long day of bewildering mystery it has been. And it may be that it will still have its day in other forms of life, for ages and ages. But for one form of life its day is coming to an end, if it is not ended. In the life of humanity—in all that is best and greatest in it—its day is ended. The dawn of its glad successor is already here, and it is only those who, sad to say, are blind who do not already see it in its beauty.

The essence of the cosmic process is competition, and the essence of the ethical process is co-operation. Yes ; I know that never in the whole history of humanity has competition seemed so frightfully and painfully alive as it

is to-day. That is precisely true—it is frightfully and painfully alive; and it may, for a while, be yet more frightfully and painfully alive. But we know very well what this means. They are its last struggles, *and we know they are.*

For humanity, the cosmic process—Competition—is hurrying furiously to its end; and the ethical process—Co-operation—is, with the quiet consciousness of its future, taking its place, and the end is already in view. Whatever single word may be used to express this end surely need not trouble us. The only single word I know is the word Socialism, and Socialism therefore I have called it. But whatever be the word, the thing itself is for me expressed in three words—Justice, Kindness, Love; and none of us can misunderstand these. The immediate aim of what I have written is to induce the class to which I belong to make a beginning, voluntarily and unitedly, in the direction of attaining this end. The ultimate aim of it is the attainment of the end itself.

Yes, in so far as it is bad, the old system of society is coming to an end, and we know it and are thankful for it. And one bad portion of the old system is the class system, and this too is coming to an end, and we know it and are

thankful for it. My appeal to the upper classes is to use what may still be useful in the old class system *for the last time*; let it at least do a great thing before it ceases to be, and so bring it to an end.

This is your opportunity. So far as we can see, there may never be such another. The old class system is sick unto death. It must die, whatever you do. The sole question is, *when and how?* Whatever purpose it may have served in the past, it is of no service, it is only of disservice, now, and we know it.

In the early pages of what I have written I appealed to the members of the upper classes, as a class, to do a great deed of justice to the members of another class. And, as such, as members of a class, I make the same appeal to them again now. I could never have appealed to them in this way but for two reasons.

It seemed, in the first place, peculiarly fitting, so long as the class system still survived, to take the opportunity of its survival, and to appeal to those at the top, who had so much to give, to come to the aid of those at the bottom, to whom so much should be given. Again—I hoped, and I still hope, that if I were successful in my appeal, and the members of

the upper classes did thus come to the aid of these helpless people, and do a great deed of justice which cries out to be done, their doing it would of itself be the most effective means of bringing to an end for ever, and in the best and happiest way, the whole system of class divisions. For the only means by which this deed of justice can be done are personal aid and personal contact with those who are aided. And I do indeed believe that such personal contact on the part of all the members of the upper classes, along with the spirit in which the aid would be given, would result in forming such close, familiar, and equal personal bonds and friendships as would make for ever impossible a return to the old and outworn system which has kept us all apart for so long, but which we see at last can keep us apart no longer.

I have appealed to the members of the upper classes, and in making the appeal I have often blamed those to whom the appeal was made; nor do I, as I read over what I have written, feel that the words used express more than the truth. But here at the end I wish once more to reiterate and emphasise a statement that I have made before. The blame is indeed there, but it lies far more with the system of society than with the human beings who live and

suffer under it. I do not, of course, deny that there may be some members of the upper classes whose almost insane devotion to selfish and luxurious pleasure is a stain and a disgrace to the class to which they belong. My life brings me but little among such persons, and I know them chiefly by what I hear of them. But be they few or many, they are, after all, but the scum of us, and should they persist, they would soon share the fate of all scum, and be ladled off and tossed away. But let me say at once that in the continued existence of such poor, frothy stuff I do not believe. Nay, there are, I think, not wanting signs that the natural reaction against this dreary hedonism has already set in. The reaction is natural; for hedonism is a parasitical disease, and is foreign to that portion of the body upon which it has fastened. The whole body of the upper classes is, with few exceptions, sound and healthy, as is the whole body of every class in the country; nor has it ever entered into my head to suppose that it was otherwise.

And in such a connection let me say this. I have appealed, it is true, to one class specially to come to the aid of another, and I have not rarely reproached them with a neglect of duty. But the very last thing I desire to do is to set one

class against another. Nay, one of the objects with which I began to write, and with which I now end, is to soften all such asperities, and to bring all classes so closely together, that at last no such thing as classes will exist at all.

And this, and all that goes with this, gained, what follows? It is no foolish or ignorant optimism, but only a steady and sober statement of fact that, with this gained, there lies before all of us a future quite unknown, unimagined, and largely at present, perhaps, unimaginable. With things as they are now, with the bare elementary claims of human justice quite unsatisfied, and recognised by us to be so; with all the uneasiness and indignation that goes along with this; what can be the quality of the joy among us, what our appreciation of beauty, our zest of life? Remedy the injustice—and we know that it can be remedied—and all that is greatest and sweetest in life and in its possibilities would be within our reach as they have never, in this or any other age, been within men's reach before. Beauty and knowledge, and joy and love and the zest of life, and the sense of coming nearer to the realising of life's ideal—all this would open out to us as it has never opened out before.

Once again I turn to the members of my own class. I beseech you to listen to my appeal.

It is an appeal at first to your sense of justice and of pity, to right one particular wrong which does really cry out to you above all—nay, is it not to you alone?—to be righted. And this surely might well seem enough if it ended here. But this is not enough; it does not end here This is but the beginning of an end towards which all that is best in you and in humanity is striving. The first step that we have to take towards the attainment of this end must be the satisfaction of the claims of human justice; and this is the step that I appeal to you to take, these are the claims that I beseech you to satisfy. The claims being what they are, and what we know them to be, and the end being what it is, and what, in so far as our knowledge can embrace so great a thing, we know it to be also, will you not let all that is best and greatest in you prevail, and do that which, once again, I beseech you to do?

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